WHY BUSH CAN'T GOVERN Jonathan Chait

THE NEW REPUBLIC

A SENATOR WORSE THAN LOTT
Sarah Wildman

GORE'S GRACEFUL EXIT
Martin Peretz

ECEMBER 30, 2002 & JANUARY 6, 2003

COMEBACK KIDS
How Two Grad Students Convinced Gary Hart to Run for President
Michelle Cottle

#BXBKDML **AUTO**5-DIGIT 94301
#THR00000068171/5#07 05JAN04 43
RON K UNZ 0001
555 BRYANT ST #371 4614-10
PALO ALTO CA 94301-1704

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOW ACCEPTING GRANT APPLICATIONS

Liberty and Access *for* All

INTRODUCING THE BEAUMONT FOUNDATION OF AMERICA

The Beaumont Foundation of America is an extraordinary example of how the civil justice system can work to make a difference in the lives of Americans. The Foundation's core purpose is to grant state-of-the art, Internet-enabled, wireless computer hardware to Americans who do not have access to the vast educational benefits of the Internet, and to collaborate with existing successful organizations to provide the technical support to utilize it. Grants from the Foundation will be available across America.

The Beaumont Foundation of America was created with funds generated by the settlement of a class action lawsuit. The Foundation believes the unique circumstances under which it was created can serve as a model for similar class action settlements and give rise to a new form of American philanthropy.

The Beaumont Foundation of America seeks collaboration with successful philanthropies that share its mission of providing access to information for everyone, everywhere, anytime.

The Beaumont Foundation of America is granting computer hardware to qualifying non-profits, faith-based and community organizations, libraries, schools and individuals in need. **Grant applications for 2003 are now being accepted through March. For more information, including future grant application opportunities, log on to www.bmtfoundation.com or call us at 866.505.COMP.**

INFORMATION: EVERYONE. EVERYWHERE. ANYTIME.

BEAUMONT FOUNDATION
of America

A NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATION

Log on to www.bmtfoundation.com or call 866.505.COMP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NEW REPUBLIC

A Journal of Politics and the Arts

WASHINGTON, D.C.
DECEMBER 30, 2002 & JANUARY 6, 2003
ISSUES 4,589 & 4,590

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
MARTIN PERETZ

EDITOR
PETER BEINART
Literary Editor LEON WIESELTIER
Executive Editor CHRISTOPHER ORR
Managing Editor SARAH BLUSTAIN
Foreign Editor JOSHUA KURLANTZICK
Senior Editors
JONATHAN CHAIT, JONATHAN COHN, MICHELLE COTTLE, GREGG EASTERBROOK, JOHN B. JUDIS, LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN, ANDREW SULLIVAN, JAMES WOOD
Legal Affairs JEFFREY ROSEN
Assistant Managing Editor SACHA ZIMMERMAN
Films: STANLEY KAUFFMANN
Theater: ROBERT BRUSTEIN
Poetry: GLYN MAXWELL
Art: JED PERL
Architecture: MARTIN FILLER
Dance: JENNIFER HOMANS
New Republic Books (BASIC BOOKS)
VANESSA MOBLEY
Contributing Editors
FOUAD AJAMI, AKHIL REED AMAR, PETER BERKOWITZ, PAUL BERMAN, JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN, NATHAN GLAZER, ANTHONY GRAFTON, DAVID GRANN, YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI, ANN HULBERT, TONY JUDT, ROBERT KAGAN, MICHAEL KINSLEY, CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER, JEREMY MCCARTER, JOHN MCWHORTER, SHERWIN B. NULAND, DAVID RIEFF, MAGGIE SCARF, LEE SIEGEL, RONALD STEEL, CASS R. SUNSTEIN, MARGARET TALBOT, E.V. THAW, HELEN VENDLER, MICHAEL WALZER, SEAN WILENTZ, ALAN WOLFE, ROBERT WRIGHT
Contributing Artists
JACK COUGHLIN, VINT LAWRENCE, DAVID SCHORR, TOM TOLES
Associate Editors
MICHAEL CROWLEY, FRANKLIN FOER, RYAN LIZZA, NOAM SCHEIBER, JASON ZENGERLE
Associate Literary Editor RUTH FRANKLIN
Art Direction JOE HEROUN, CHRISTINE CAR/H2C
Editorial-Corporate Coordinator
LAURA E. OBOLENSKY
Production and Information-Technology Director
BRUCE STEINKE
Production Manager HENRY RIGGS
Assistant Editors
SPENCER ACKERMAN, KARA BASKIN, CHRISTIANE CULHANE, SARAH WILDMAN
Assistant to the Editor ALISON HORNSTEIN
Assistant Literary Editor ERIN LEIB
Assistant Poetry Editor MELANIE REHAK
Reporter-Researchers
HUDSON MORGAN, ALEX STONE

PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER
STEPHANIE SANDBERG
General Manager ANNETTE POCICA
Consumer Marketing Director PETER GLOVIN
Online Business Director ARI GERSEN

ADVERTISING SALES AND MARKETING
Associate Publisher RICHARD PARKER
Director of Advertising, West
JOAN STAPLETON TOOLEY
Account Manager JULIE STURMAK
Sales Consultant DAVID NUDO
Marketing Assistant ETHAN FISCHER
Business Assistant SAMANTHA SPINNEY

FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
Accounting Manager RITA CHERKASSKIY
Accounting Assistant VANESSA WILSON
Business Assistant MANDY HANSEN

BOARD OF DIRECTORS
Chairman ROGER HERTOG
MARTIN PERETZ
MICHAEL STEINHARDT

4 **CORRESPONDENCE** Can anyone report honestly from Iraq? &c.

6 **PETER BEINART** TRB: CLUELESS What conservatives still don't understand about race.

9 **THE EDITORS** ISLAND GETAWAY America's best hope against Pyongyang? Refugees.

10 **NOTEBOOK** Don Nickles may be better on race. Too bad he's a bigot on gays, &c.

12 **SARAH WILDMAN** CLOSED SESSIONS The senator with a worse race record than Lott.

13 **MARTIN PERETZ** HIGH END Al Gore goes out with style.

15 **ELIZABETH RUBIN** LONDON DISPATCH: FAST FRIENDS The Iraqis meet the Americans.

16 **JONATHAN CHAIT** SPECIAL K Who makes policy in the Bush White House? No one (except the lobbyists down the street).

19 **NOAM SCHEIBER** HATCHET JOB Maybe it's not Lott conservatives hate. It's his job.

22 **MICHELLE COTTLE** COMEBACK KIDS Where did Gary Hart's nascent 2004 presidential campaign begin? In a Harvard dorm room, where two idealistic neophytes decided he was the man to save America. Welcome to Will and Antwaun's Excellent Adventure.

26 **STANLEY KAUFFMANN** ON FILMS: HOOPLA AND QUIET Charlie Kaufman's *Adaptation* is self-consciously realistic; the Iranian film *Blackboards* is simply real.

27 **HELEN VENDLER** WHEN ART FAILS *Amazing Grace: An Anthology of Poems About Slavery, 1660–1810* edited by James G. Basker

33 **GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB** THE PHILOSOPHY OF MONEY *The Mind and the Market: Capitalism in Modern European Thought* by Jerry Z. Muller

38 **RUTH FRANKLIN** MORBID LONGINGS *The Little Friend* by Donna Tartt

40 **REETIKA VAZIRANI** POEM *Ghalib's Prophecy of His Death, 1860–1861*

42 **LEON WIESELTIER** WASHINGTON DIARIST: TUTOR

On the Cover : Illustration by RYAN SANCHEZ
On the Web : www.thenewrepublic.com

THE NEW REPUBLIC, Vol. 227, Numbers 27 & 28, Issues 4,589 and 4,590, December 30, 2002 & January 6, 2003. (Printed in the United States on December 18, 2002.) Published weekly (except for combined issues dated March 4 & 11, April 1 & 8, July 8 & 15, August 5 & 12, August 19 & 26, September 9 & 16, December 2 & 9, and December 30, 2002 & January 6, 2003) at 1331 H Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20005. Telephone (202) 508-4444. For advertising inquiries, please contact Mandy Hansen at (202) 508-4444 or our NY sales office at (212) 465-8447. Yearly subscriptions, $59.94; foreign, $99.94 (U.S. funds); Canada, $79.94 (U.S. funds). Back issues, $8.00 domestic and $10.00 foreign/Canada (includes postage & handling).

© 2002 by The New Republic, LLC.

(ISSN 0028-6583). Periodicals postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing offices. Rights and permissions: fax (202) 628-9383. Indexed in Readers' Guide, Media Review Digest. Microform, Canadian Periodical Index, CD-ROM, issue, and article copies are available through University Microfilms Intnl., 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. Telephone 1-800-521-0600. Postmaster: Send changes of address to The New Republic, P.O. Box 37298, Boone, IA 50037-0298. Member, Audit Bureau of Circulations. Unsolicited manuscripts can be returned only if accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope (e-mail address: tnr@aol.com). For subscription inquiries or problems call 1-800-827-1289 or visit our website at www.thenewrepublic.com.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CORRESPONDENCE

American standards

TO THE EDITORS:

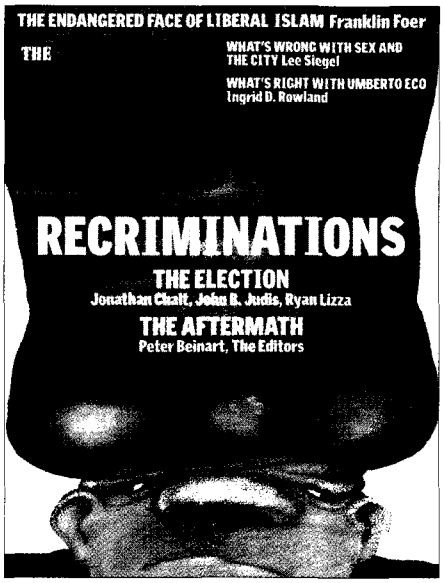
The experience of Khaled Abou El Fadl in Franklin Foer's article "Moral Hazard" rings true for many liberal Muslims (November 18). There are few places left, outside of academia, where Muslims can engage in critical dialogue about Islam and the Muslim world without being intimidated or made to feel unwelcome. If an open debate about Islam—something that is sorely needed at this critical time—cannot take place here in the United States, how can we have hope that it will take place in the Muslim world? The best hope for changing the discourse in the American Muslim community is by championing the rights we enjoy in the United States: free speech, diversity, religious freedom, and democracy. Protecting these rights is the challenge before our community today.

AHMED H. AL-RAHIM
Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts

TO THE EDITORS:

I read the article "Moral Hazard" by Franklin Foer and felt a little bit betrayed by his journalistic standards. I edit *The Minaret*, a Muslim magazine that Foer refers to in the article. He reported that *The Minaret* refused to publish Abou El Fadl's articles. This is inaccurate. On the contrary, Abou El Fadl himself stopped sending his articles to the magazine. *The Minaret* has set an example by publishing opinions in conflict with its editorial policies. *The Minaret* has even published articles by authors like Daniel Pipes, who describe *The Minaret* in a negative fashion.

I feel that Foer has done a great disservice to media ethics by not checking any accusations with me. This is damaging to the reputation of *The Minaret*, which does not censor anyone. The contents of the magazine are clear evidence of its adherence to the policy of freedom. Foer quotes me as saying, in an e-mail to Abou El Fadl, "Good luck with your career that is based on self-promotion and self-aggrandizement"; this has nothing to do with Abou El Fadl's article in *The Minaret*. The quote referred to an op-ed that Abou El Fadl wrote in the *Los Angeles Times* accusing Muslim leaders of not doing enough to condemn the September 11 attacks. Yet, *The Minaret* published an investigative report arguing that Abou El Fadl's assumptions were erroneous, as Muslim


THE ENDANGERED FACE OF LIBERAL ISLAM Franklin Foer
THE
WHAT'S WRONG WITH SEX AND THE CITY Lee Siegel
WHAT'S RIGHT WITH UMBERTO ECO Ingrid D. Rowland
RECRIMINATIONS
THE ELECTION
Jonathan Chait, John B. Judis, Ryan Lizza
THE AFTERMATH
Peter Beinart, The Editors

organizations were among the first to join the nation in condemning the attacks. In an article that *The Minaret* posted on the Internet, it was argued that Abou El Fadl's *Los Angeles Times* op-ed was not based on facts. It was in this context that I wrote what is quoted by Foer. The quote has nothing to do with censorship or freedom of expression.

ASLAM ABDULLAH
Editor-in-chief
The Minaret
Los Angeles, California

FRANKLIN FOER REPLIES:

Abou El Fadl began writing a regular column for *The Minaret* magazine in 1985. According to Abou El Fadl, *The Minaret* ran a free advertisement for a collection of his essays alongside his regular entry as part of his agreement with the magazine. Then, last summer, after Abou El Fadl blasted Muslim leadership in a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed, *The Minaret* refused to publish one of his columns for the first time since he started writing it. That week, the magazine also stopped running the advertisement for his book. Soon after the *Los Angeles Times* op-ed ran, Aslam Abdullah sent Abou El Fadl an e-mail wishing him "[g]ood luck with your career that is based on self-promotion and self-aggrandizement." Maher Hatout, the spokesman for the Islamic Center of Southern California (ICSC), the organization that owns *The Minaret*, called Abou El Fadl's father in Egypt and told him *The Minaret* would resume the column provided Abou El Fadl apologize for his op-ed. I tried to check Abou El Fadl's version of this chain of events with the ICSC. My calls were never returned.

Youth culture

TO THE EDITORS:

In Peter Beinart's TRB, "Age Gap," he makes a nice case about how the elderly have tilted the electoral system to their favor like a cruise ship bingo hall on an ocean swell (November 11). Good. He then calls for politicians to try to involve younger voters more. Great. And then he knocks the "slackers watching MTV" among America's youth. Not so great. MTV's "Rock the Vote" has caught a fair amount of grief for being vapid, but it is still a continuing force trying to get young people to vote. That's not slacking at all.

EVAN P. SCHULTZ
Washington, D.C.

Broadcast news

TO THE EDITORS:

Franklin Foer's piece on how Iraq manipulates the media is so replete with errors of fact it crosses over into fiction ("Air War," October 28). I'm not sure why anyone would go through the process of obtaining the Iraqi visas Foer describes, other than to fuel dinner-party stories about the horrors of getting into Iraq or to rack up frequent guest points at the Inter-Continental Hotel. Like many elements of the piece, the idea that the only way to get a definitive answer is to travel to the Iraqi Embassy in Amman hasn't been true for many years.

Foer seems not to have seen any of the many reports written or aired by correspondents familiar with the region who come here and actually spend time getting to know people and having conversations that don't involve either a government minder or the threat of execution. A tip, by the way—reporters don't have to stay at the Al Rasheed Hotel.

Foer also quotes Peter Arnett as saying, "You go in and they control what you do. . . . So you have no other option other than to report the opinion of the government of Iraq." Well, actually, one does always have the option of acting like a journalist. That means reporting the opinion of the government of Iraq as opinion when it is clearly opinion rather than fact.

After noting the Iraqi government's close scrutiny of my reporting, Foer's line-by-line analysis of my reports would be amusing if it weren't so blatantly selective. There is no mention, for instance, of my statement that "Iraqi prisons are full of people who have said no to the region

continued on page 41

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOW [illegible] GRANT APPLICATIONS

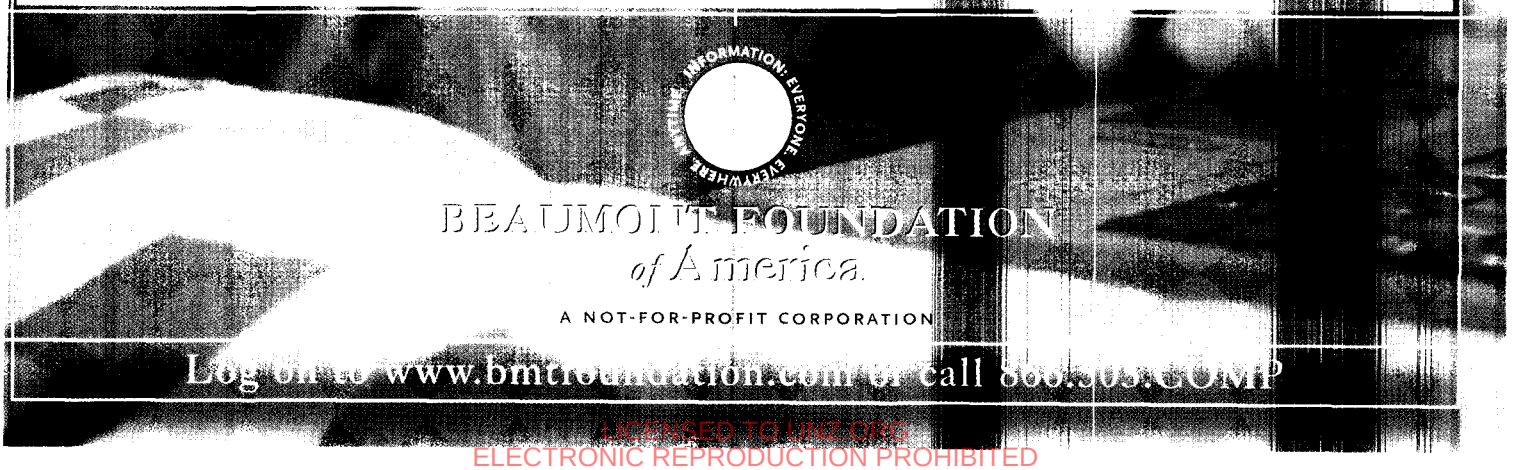
Liberty and Access for All

As part of its pilot program, the Beaumont Foundation of America is currently working with Native American communities in North Dakota, South Dakota and New Mexico to provide access to technology and the rich resources available on the Internet. Next year the Foundation will expand to include additional Native American communities across the country.

The Beaumont Foundation of America will collaborate with tribal leaders to provide access to technology on reservations and in schools – joining the ongoing efforts of Native communities to bridge the Digital Divide by providing Internet-enabled, wireless technology.

The Beaumont Foundation of America was created with funds generated by the settlement of a class action lawsuit. It is an extraordinary example of how the civil justice system can work to make a difference in the lives of Americans.

The Beaumont Foundation of America is granting computer hardware to qualifying non-profits, faith-based and community organizations, libraries, schools and individuals in need. **Grant applications for 2003 are now being accepted through March. For more information, including future grant application opportunities, log on to www.bmtfoundation.com or call us at 866.505.COMP.**



BEAUMONT FOUNDATION
of America

A NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATION

Log on to www.bmtfoundation.com or call 866.505.COMP

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Clueless

TRENT LOTT HAS spent the last week apologizing for endorsing Strom Thurmond's segregationist 1948 presidential run. Conservatives have spent the last week insisting that, his apologies notwithstanding, Lott should step down as Senate Republican leader. Both developments are welcome. And yet, neither Lott nor his conservative critics have fully confronted what he did wrong.

The problem with Lott's contrition is that you can't apologize without honestly acknowledging what you're apologizing for. And, despite a week of self-flagellation, Lott still doesn't have a clue. In his Friday press conference in Pascagoula, Mississippi, Lott called his praise of Thurmond's 1948 run a "grievous mistake." But Lott's offense wasn't the comment per se. Had his praise of Thurmond been genuinely at odds with his civil rights record over the last 30 years, the story probably would have blown over. Lott's problem is that the comment fit a pattern of neo-segregationism that stretches throughout his political career. It is that pattern—from Lott's work for the rabidly segregationist Representative William Colmer, to his defense of tax breaks for racist Bob Jones University, to his ties to the Council of Conservative Citizens, to his praise of Jefferson Davis—that Lott needed to face in his Pascagoula press conference.

Instead, he pretended the Thurmond comment was an anomaly in a career devoted to racial equality. "I grew up with segregation here in these communities," Lott said. "But I want to note that ... we worked hard to overcome that." *We*? Lott hasn't "worked hard" to overcome segregation in Mississippi. He supported it as long as he could and has been defending its vestiges and memory ever since. "I have tried to and will continue to do everything in my power to ensure that we never go back to that type of [segregated] society again," Lott said later. How? By voting against a federal holiday for Martin Luther King Jr.? This Monday, on Black Entertainment Television, Lott said, "My actions, I think, don't reflect my voting record." Lott isn't grappling with his terrible record on race; he's evading it.

And Lott hadn't even truly taken responsibility for the Thurmond comment itself. "To those who believe that I was implying that this [American] dream is for some and not for all," Lott explained in Pascagoula, "that's just not true. But I apologize for those that got that impression." What a classic bit of Washington doublespeak. If Lott really doesn't think he was endorsing segregation, he has nothing to apologize for. After all, if people misunderstand your words and then attack you on the basis of that misunderstanding, they should apologize to you, not the other way around. But, if Lott wasn't endorsing segregation when he said the United States would have been better off had Thurmond won the presidency, what did he mean? Thurmond, after all, was a one-issue candidate, and that issue was white supremacy. Once again, the Senate Republican leader didn't wrestle with his transgression; he denied it.

Given the eloquence of commentators such as Robert A. George, Andrew Sullivan, Charles Krauthammer, and David Frum, criticizing the right's reaction to the Lott affair feels a little ungenerous. Still, there are aspects of the conservative response that suggest that some on the right still don't fully get it. *National Review*'s "LOTT SHOULD GO" editorial, for instance, begins by asking, "Is Lott a racist? We don't think so." Similarly, on "Fox News Sunday" last week, host Tony Snow said, "Trent Lott isn't a racist or a segregationist. I know the guy. Trust me on this." This is strange stuff. *National Review* and Snow seem to be drawing a distinction between Lott's private character and his public behavior. But no one cares about the love (or hate) in Lott's heart; how he treats black people in private is irrelevant. The issue is whether Lott's Thurmond comments, seen in the context of his public record, are racist and segregationist. On their face, they clearly are, and *National Review* and Snow present no evidence to the contrary. Referring to Lott's supposed private decency, then, feels like a dodge, a way to avoid full judgment on Lott's behavior itself.

National Review goes on to call "many of the attacks on him [Lott] dishonest and opportunistic." But *National Review* presents no examples of such dishonesty or opportunism. The magazine seems to be accusing liberals of opportunistically seizing on Lott's comments to settle old scores with the Republican leader. Problem is, *National Review* admits to doing the same thing, acknowledging, "We have long considered Lott a clumsy and ineffective leader." Later, *National Review* says Lott has suffered "unfair attacks"—presumably from blacks and liberals—again, without specifying any. Presumably liberals and blacks have unfairly suggested that Lott is a racist or segregationist. But why are those charges unfair? *National Review* seems to think it so obvious that such phrases can never apply to a prominent Republican that it doesn't even bother to explain why.

National Review also seems to consider liberal criticism of Lott dishonest because liberals haven't been as critical of Democrats. In an article titled "SELECTIVE MORAL OUTRAGE," Mark R. Levin details Bill Clinton's praise for segregationist Arkansas Senator William Fulbright. But it's a dumb comparison. First, Clinton, while praising Fulbright, never praised his segregationism. If Lott had simply called Thurmond a great old guy—rather than specifically endorsing his segregationist presidential run—his comments wouldn't have made a stir either. Second, Clinton doesn't have a record of segregationist comments and actions; Lott does.

The other supposed example of liberal hypocrisy is West Virginia Senator Robert Byrd, who in the 1940s recruited for the Ku Klux Klan and in 2001 made a bizarre comment about "white n—." But Byrd has largely repented for his past racist associations and offensive vocabulary by compiling a pretty good record on race over the last two decades. Unlike Lott, Byrd supported the 1982 extension of the Voting Rights Act and a federal holiday for Martin Luther King Jr. The NAACP's last congressional report card gives Byrd 79 percent, compared with 12 percent for the Senate Republican leader.

Again, *National Review* deserves credit for calling on Lott to resign. But, even in so doing, it reveals two conservative assumptions so deep-seated that they need not even be explicitly defended. The first is that prominent conservatives are never racist. Even when they say or do publicly racist things, their innate decency is a matter of faith. The second is that liberals—and more specifically black leaders—are never sincere in their outrage. Black politicians—the people black America has elected to Congress—are, almost by definition, racial hucksters. Unlike, say, the editors of *National Review*, their response to Lott's comments couldn't be animated simply by their belief that what he has said and done is wrong. These are the premises that underlie conservative thinking on race on the eve of Trent Lott's downfall. And, while that downfall is a wonderful thing, they suggest that when it comes to race, the conservative movement still has a ways to go.

PETER BEINART

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Office of National Drug Control Policy

IF YOU DON'T WANT SOMETHING TO BE *true*, DOES THAT MAKE IT *PROPAGANDA?*

When we're children and we don't want to listen, we put our hands over our ears. As we grow up, we create new ways to ignore things we don't want to hear. We make excuses. We look the other way. We label things "propaganda" or "scare tactics."

But it doesn't work. It doesn't make the truth go away.

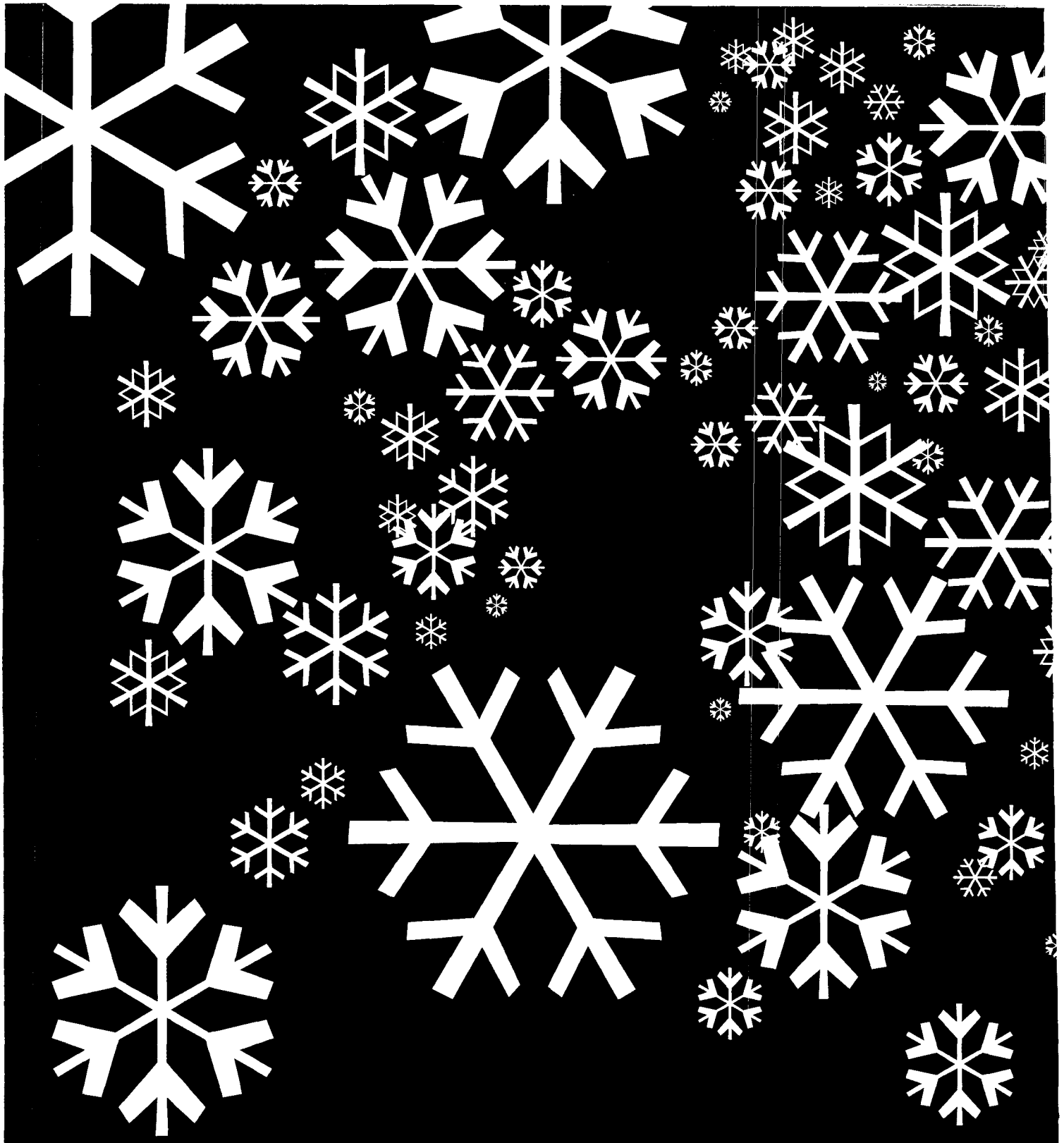
Drug money funds terrible things: intimidation, bribery, torture and murder. And drug money comes from drug buyers.

So if people stopped buying drugs, there wouldn't be a drug market. No drug market, no drug dealers. No drug dealers, no drug violence, corruption and misery.

It may not be what you want to hear. But that doesn't make it any less true.

theantidrug.com

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



THIS SEASON, SKIP THE LINES.
GIVE A GIFT SUBSCRIPTION.

A gift subscription to *The New Republic* keeps you out of the stores and offers a year of the best political and cultural writing you can find.

THE NEW REPUBLIC

It's easy. Call 1-800-827-1289 or visit us online at www.tnr.com/gifts

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Island Getaway

THOUGH IRAQ IS at the top of the administration's agenda, North Korea may be its most difficult problem. Bribery hasn't worked: Pyongyang has restarted its nuclear project. And war is not an option since North Korean forces, massed less than 50 miles from Seoul, could kill millions of South Koreans at the first sign of U.S. aggression. But there is one option—which Washington has largely ignored—that might bring down Kim Jong Il: promoting a massive flow of refugees from the North.

Despite the dangers, as many as 300,000 North Koreans have escaped across the northern border into China, and experts believe millions more, given incentives, would follow. The humanitarian reasons for the U.S. to encourage this exodus are in and of themselves compelling. The North Korean regime operates a massive system of concentration camps and systematically starves its people. Refugees deported back to North Korea from China are frequently killed. But so far the U.S. has been embarrassingly silent. The State Department does not consider North Koreans who flee to have the legal status of refugees since South Korea automatically gives them citizenship. But that citizenship does most little good since few make it to South Korea and since, as non-refugees, they are not entitled to U.S. asylum. Bush administration officials have given no major speeches highlighting North Korea's human rights abuses. The U.S. government has not even spent the tiny sum necessary to translate a 2001 book by Norbert Vollertsen, a German doctor who, as one of the only aid workers with access to much of North Korea, produced a detailed account of Pyongyang's crimes against humanity. Changing all of this, while largely symbolic, would show that the U.S. sees North Korea for what it is: one of the great moral causes of our time.

Even more importantly, helping North Koreans emigrate could help destabilize the regime. Korea specialists say the ability of refugees to procure outside information has already put pressure on Kim Jong Il's regime. North Korea's state-run media portrays the South as a land of beggars. But defectors say refugees in China are able to send news about China's rising prosperity and South Korea's booming growth back home. As *Time* magazine recently reported, "North Koreans are watching South Korean TV in China, then going back into [North Korea] and spreading the word. ... These days, North Koreans know South Koreans and Chinese are rich. Many dream of escaping to these countries." As a result, aid workers in Pyongyang say discontent and a desire to emigrate is growing.

With anger rising, an exodus of North Koreans might convince mid- and low-level members of Kim Jong Il's party to turn against the leadership. There are thousands of such party members over whom, as Korea specialists note, Kim Jong Il is not able to exert as tight control as he used to. Victor Cha, a prominent Korea scholar at Georgetown University, notes that "real regime change will come from the bottom, from people who can't oppose the regime but who can vote with their feet." If North Koreans began pouring across the border, it's possible the regime in Pyongyang—like the regime in East Germany undone by mass migration in 1989—couldn't summon the will to stop them.

To move this process forward, the United States should revamp immigration laws to welcome North Korean refugees as asylum-seekers at our embassies and borders. Congress should launch a joint fact-finding mission with the Japanese, South Koreans, and Europeans to gain information from North Koreans in China about the human rights abuses they suffered. And President Bush and the leaders of European countries, which have diplomats on the ground in Pyongyang, should speak out more aggressively on these issues. Given the amount of information that penetrates North Korea these days, these steps would signal to North Koreans our intentions to support their efforts to leave. At the same time, the United States should quietly pressure China to support North Korean emigration as well. This isn't as unlikely as it sounds. While China fears a major influx, it is much more likely to support a diplomatic policy toward Pyongyang than any U.S. threat of force. What's more, assisting refugees would help Beijing burnish its own human rights reputation, an image it desperately wants to improve. And, if the United States offered China financial incentives to provide legal status and safe haven for refugees, Beijing would not have to take responsibility for managing the exodus alone.

Of course, it would be better if North Koreans could live in freedom without having to flee. Refugees are subject to many hardships. And such a pro-exodus policy will take time: Even if a refugee crisis undercuts Kim Jong Il in the long run, in the near term he still has access to dangerous weapons. But an imperfect North Korean policy is better than no policy at all, which is what the United States seems to have today. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

NOTEBOOK

FIGHTING THE LAST WAR: In the minds of many conservatives, the GOP's collective response to Trent Lott's racially divisive comments at Strom Thurmond's birthday celebration has been a watershed moment. "[O]ne after another, Republicans ... came forward and said, 'This is unacceptable, and it personally offends me,'" Peggy Noonan explained on "The Chris Matthews Show." "And I think, in part, it tells you about a new—somehow, in terms of the aesthetics of the Republican Party—a new party being born." But, if this "new party" is finally catching up on civil rights issues that were settled 30 years ago, it seems to be struggling with those of a more recent vintage. The man many in the GOP hope will replace Lott as their party's leader in the Senate is Oklahoma Senator Don Nickles, who last Sunday became the first Republican senator to call for a vote on Lott's future. And, while Nickles's record on race is marginally better than Lott's, his record of intolerance toward gays is, remarkably, even worse. Consider the 1997 nomination of James Hormel—SPAM scion, Democratic donor, and gay man—to serve as U.S. ambassador to Luxembourg, a nomination opposed by both Lott and Nickles. While Lott embarrassed himself by comparing Hormel's homosexuality to alcoholism, sex addiction, and kleptomania on "The Armstrong Williams Show," he at least argued, "You should still love that person. You should not mistreat them or treat them as outcasts." Nickles, by contrast, simply railed against Hormel's homosexuality on "Fox News Sunday": "[O]ne might have that lifestyle, but if one promotes it as acceptable behavior ... then I don't think they should be representing this country. ... I think it's immoral behavior." Nor was that the only occasion on which Nickles has gone out of his way to demonize homosexuality. In 1996, he introduced the Senate version of the Defense of Marriage Act, which created a federal definition of marriage as a union between a man and a woman, specifically so that gay marriages would not be recognized as such by the federal government. That same year, he helped lead the fight against the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, which would have outlawed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the workplace. Like many congressional Republicans, Nickles has long sought to decrease funding for the National Endowment for the Arts, but the Oklahoma senator almost always singles out a particular type of art he considers obscene: "The foundation for the performance of both Miss Hughes and Mr. Miller," Nickles complained of two NEA-funded artists in 1991, "are to promote and advance homoerotic themes." But perhaps the most revealing example of Nickles's anti-gay bigotry came in a 1992 campaign debate, when he was given the opportunity to ask one question of his Democratic opponent. Rather than focus on the tax issues that had so far defined the race, Nickles raised a matter obscure enough that it had gone unaddressed in the campaign: "Why would you vote in favor of homosexuals being able to adopt children on an equal level with a father and mother?" Is prejudice against gays more acceptable today than prejudice against African Americans? Of course it is. But, rather than spend their time congratulating themselves for their newfound empathy on the latter topic, Republicans might want to start developing some tolerance on the former. Otherwise, 30 years from now, we'll have to listen to Noonan's gushing announcement of her party's breakthrough on gay rights.

SLOW START: While we've had our doubts about House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi's ideology, her management skills at least had seemed unassailable. As minority whip, she helped shepherd a campaign finance reform bill through the House; as a candidate for the minority leader's post, she outfoxed all of her competitors. But now there's cause for concern about Pelosi's management skills, too: After five weeks on the job, she still hasn't picked a chairman for the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC), a task that should have been at the top of her to-do list. The DCCC chairman, after all, is the person in charge of helping the Democrats take back the House in 2004; the job promises to be particularly challenging this cycle since the new campaign finance laws prohibit the DCCC from raising soft money to fund its efforts. Pelosi originally felt out Massachusetts Representative Ed Markey about whether he wanted the job, but he said no; California Representative Robert Matsui and Ohio Representative Sherrod Brown said they didn't want the post, either. All of which has been music to the Republicans' ears. Complains one senior Democratic aide, "She's giving ammunition to Republicans who are telling everyone who will listen that even the Democrats don't think they can win back the House. That's why they can't get anybody to be DCCC chair." Even worse, Pelosi has strung along the one person who does want the job, Louisiana Representative William Jefferson—which has angered Jefferson's fellow members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC). "Our caucus is the largest and most senior caucus of Democrats here in Washington," CBC member Bennie Thompson recently told a *Roll Call* reporter who asked about Jefferson and the DCCC post. "Our party should not ignore a caucus with that kind of credentials." Says a House Democratic aide, "If she's going to say no to Jefferson, she should tell him no sooner rather than later. The longer the CBC is hanging out there, it just compounds the political problem for her." It's possible that Pelosi is just getting her sea legs and that these early troubles will disappear once she gets comfortable in her new leadership post. Then again, Pelosi's slow start could signal more management problems down the road. After all, as one senior Democratic aide puts it, "The scary thing is, this is the easy part."

AGAIN: Eight years after Rwanda, the world may be witnessing another genocide on the African continent. This one is harder to see because the mechanism of death isn't machetes; it's lack of food. Zimbabwe's Matabele minority has suffered at the hands of President Robert Mugabe's Shona-dominated Zimbabwe African National Union Patri-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

otic Front (ZANU-PF) party for as long as Zimbabwe has been independent. So it is no surprise that they, even more than their oppressed countrymen to the north, withstood threats, beatings, and murders and last March cast their ballots for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change. Tragically, the ZANU-PF bludgeoned and rigged their way to reelection nonetheless, as African leaders throughout the continent cheered. And Mugabe is now taking his revenge in maize. His catastrophic decision to cleanse the country's farms of their white owners has forced the country—once southern Africa's breadbasket—to import food from the world's charities. And Mugabe is making sure little of it enters the south. The government has only permitted half a million tons of maize into Zimbabwe, all of it distributed through the state-operated Grain Marketing Board, one of whose managers told *The Times* of London, "We only sell to Shona-speakers." Reports of desperate hunger have been trickling out of Matabeleland for months. And Didymus Mutasa, ZANU-PF's administrative secretary and senior bureaucrat, recently admitted that whittling down Zimbabwe's population from its current twelve million is his government's explicit plan. "We would be better off," he said, "with only six million people ... who support the liberation struggle. ... We don't want all these extra people." In the wake of the Rwandan genocide, Washington witnessed an impassioned round of never-agains. It's time for the Bush administration, in conjunction with the world's other great powers, to show that it was listening.

CHARM SCHOOL: Academics don't often criticize tenure decisions at other universities for fear of having their own, often messy, procedures held up for scrutiny. So it is striking that 24 distinguished historians—including Akira Iriye, chair of Harvard's history department; Alan Brinkley, chair of Columbia's history department; the famed Southern historian Eugene Genovese; and CUNY professor emeritus Gertrude Himmelfarb—have come together to protest Brooklyn College's denial of tenure to Robert David Johnson. Johnson has written three well-reviewed books, two published by Harvard University Press—an extremely good record for a 34-year-old associate professor. His students testify to his energy and intellectual scrupulousness. So why was Johnson denied tenure? According to the protesting historians, because Brooklyn College deemed him insufficiently collegial. And how did Johnson violate this rather novel criterion? Johnson says he offended his colleagues by criticizing a post–September 11 forum that he considered one-sided and anti-American and by protesting a job search geared exclusively toward hiring a woman. The letter-writers called Brooklyn College's rationale "a grave threat to academic freedom." Not to mention a grave threat to Brooklyn College's hope of ever being taken seriously as a scholarly institution. ■

INSIDE THE BOX | Bruce Reed

THE FUTURIST

Gore decides not to run in '04. Reason: "There's more to life than beating George Bush. I did that already!"

ASK NOT

Kissinger, Mitchell quit 9/11 commission rather than sever business ties. Patriotism today: "I regret that I have but one client list to give to my country."

VACANT LOTT

Conservatives tell Trent Lott to get lost: "How are we supposed to ignore racial problems if you keep causing them?"

PHILADELPHIA STORY

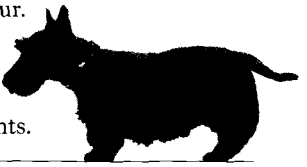
Bush says GOP doesn't believe in segregation: "We'd have no one to use as props at our conventions!"

BOMBS AWAY

White House says U.S. won't invade North Korea. Bush to Pyongyang: "Take a number!"

FALA LALALA

President's dog Barney carries video-cam for White House holiday tour. Next episode: Cheney shows Barney how to chew up secret documents.



BUDGET HAWK

Conservatives attack new Bush economic adviser Friedman for caring about the deficit. Right-wing lament: "How hard can it be to find a businessman who's good at losing money?"

TRIPP WIRE

Linda Tripp opens Christmas shop in Virginia. Motto: "When you care enough to sell out the very best."

GORE: REUTERS/LEE PROTOS; LOTT: BARNEY: REUTERS/MICHAEL SWENSEN; TRIPP:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The senator who's worse than Lott.

Closed Sessions

By SARAH WILDMAN

TRENT LOTT MUST think he's living in a nightmare. More than one week has passed since his segregationist cheerleading at Strom Thurmond's century celebration, and the chorus of anti-Lottism has swelled ever louder. Conservatives in particular can't scream loud enough. William Kristol, editor of *The Weekly Standard*, called Lott's comments "thoughtless" and told CBS's "Early Show" audience on December 12 that "Trent Lott shows such a lack of historical understanding that I think it would be appropriate for him to offer to step down." And conservative pundit Peggy Noonan told Chris Matthews this Sunday, "I am personally tired of being embarrassed by people ... who don't get what the history of race in America is, what integration has meant, what segregation was. I'm tired of being embarrassed by Republicans ... who don't get it."

It's a nice sentiment, and, if conservatives are serious about it, they might want to direct their attention one state to Lott's east, home of Alabama Republican Senator Jefferson Beauregard Sessions III. His record on race arguably rivals that of the gentleman from Mississippi—and yet has elicited not a peep of consternation from the anti-racist right.

SESSIONS ENTERED NATIONAL politics in the mid-'80s not as a politician but as a judicial nominee. Recommended by a fellow Republican from Alabama, then-Senator Jeremiah Denton, Sessions was Ronald Reagan's choice for the U.S. District Court in Alabama in the early spring of 1986. Reagan had gotten cocky by then, as more than 200 of his uberconservative judicial appointees had been rolled out across the country without serious opposition (this was pre-Robert Bork). That is, until the 39-year-old Sessions came up for review.

Sessions was U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Alabama. The year before his nomination to federal court, he had unsuccessfully prosecuted three civil rights workers—including Albert Turner, a former aide to Martin Luther King Jr.—on a tenuous case of voter fraud. The three had been working in the "Black Belt" counties of Alabama, which, after years of voting white, had begun to swing toward black candidates as voter registration drives brought in more black voters. Sessions's focus on these counties to the exclusion of others caused an uproar among civil rights leaders, especially after hours of interrogating black absentee voters produced only 14 allegedly tampered ballots out of more than 1.7 million cast in the state in the 1984 election. The activists, known as the Marion Three, were acquitted in four hours and became a cause célèbre. Civil rights groups charged that Sessions had been looking for voter fraud in the black community and overlooking the same violations among whites, at least partly to help reelect his friend Senator Denton.

On its own, the case might not have been enough to stain Sessions with the taint of racism, but there was more. Senate Democrats tracked down a career Justice Department employee named J. Gerald Hebert, who testified, albeit reluctantly, that in a conversation between the two men Sessions had labeled the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) "un-American" and "Communist-inspired." Hebert said Sessions had claimed these groups "forced civil rights down the throats of people." In his confirmation hearings, Sessions sealed his own fate by saying such groups *could* be construed as "un-American" when "they involve themselves in promoting un-American positions" in foreign policy. Hebert testified that the young lawyer tended to "pop off" on such topics regularly, noting that Sessions had called a white civil rights lawyer a "disgrace to his race" for litigating voting rights cases. Sessions acknowledged making many of the statements attributed to him but claimed that most of the time he had been joking, saying he was sometimes "loose with [his] tongue." He further admit-

RYAN SANCHEZ

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ted to calling the Voting Rights Act of 1965 a "piece of intrusive legislation," a phrase he stood behind even in his confirmation hearings.

It got worse. Another damaging witness—a black former assistant U.S. Attorney in Alabama named Thomas Figures—testified that, during a 1981 murder investigation involving the Ku Klux Klan, Sessions was heard by several colleagues commenting that he "used to think they [the Klan] were OK" until he found out some of them were "pot smokers." Sessions claimed the comment was clearly said in jest. Figures didn't see it that way. Sessions, he said, had called him "boy" and, after overhearing him chastise a secretary, warned him to "be careful what you say to white folks." Figures echoed Hebert's claims, saying he too had heard Sessions call various civil rights organizations, including the National Council of Churches and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, "un-American." Sessions denied the accusations but again admitted to frequently joking in an off-color sort of way. In his defense, he said he was not a racist, pointing out that his children went to integrated schools and that he had shared a hotel room with a black attorney several times.

During his nomination hearings, Sessions was opposed by the NAACP, the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, People for the American Way, and other civil rights groups. Senator Denton clung peevishly to his favored nominee until the bitter end, calling Sessions a "victim of a political conspiracy." The Republican-controlled Judiciary Committee finally voted ten to eight against sending Sessions to the Senate floor. The decisive vote was cast by the other senator from Alabama, Democrat Howard Heflin, a former Alabama Supreme Court justice, who said, "[M]y duty to the justice system is greater than any duty to any one individual."

None of this history stopped Sessions's political ascension. He was elected attorney general in 1994. Once in office, he was linked with a second instance of investigating absentee ballots and fraud that directly impacted the black community. He was also accused of not investigating the church burnings that swept the state of Alabama the year he became attorney general. But those issues barely made a dent in his 1996 Senate campaign, when Heflin retired and Sessions ran for his seat and won.

Since his election as a senator, Sessions has not done much to make amends for his past racial insensitivity. His voting record in the Senate has earned him consistent "F"s from the NAACP. He supported an ultimately unsuccessful effort to end affirmative action programs in the federal government (a measure so extreme that many conservatives were against it), he opposed hate-crimes laws, and he opposed a motion to investigate the disproportionate number of minorities in juvenile detention centers. Says Hillary Shelton, director of the NAACP's Washington bureau, "[Sessions's] voting record is disturbing. ... He has consistently opposed the bread-and-butter civil rights agenda." But it has been on judicial nominees that Sessions has really made a name for himself. When Sessions grabbed Heflin's Senate seat in 1996, he also nabbed a spot on the Judiciary Committee. Serving on the committee alongside some of the senators who had dismissed him 16 years earlier, Sessions has become a cheerleader for the Bush administration's judicial picks, defending such dubious nominees as Charles Pickering, who in 1959 wrote a paper defending Mississippi's anti-miscegenation law, and Judge Dennis Shedd, who dismissed nearly every fair-employment civil rights case brought before him as a federal district court judge. Sessions called Pickering "a leader for racial harmony" and a "courageous," "quality individual" who was being used as a "political pawn." Regarding Shedd, he pooh-poohed the criticism, announcing that the judge "should have been commended for the rulings he has made," not chastised.

And yet, despite his record as U.S. Attorney, attorney general of Alabama, and senator, Sessions has never received criticism from conservatives or from the leadership of the Republican Party. President Bush even campaigned for him in the last election. It's true, of course, that Sessions isn't in a leadership position, like Lott. But, if conservatives are serious about ending the perception that the GOP tolerates racism, they should look into his record as well. After all, if Noonan and friends are really "tired of being embarrassed" by this kind of racial insensitivity, they can't just start yelling once the news hits the stands. ■

Gore's graceful goodbye.

High End

By MARTIN PERETZ

NOW THAT AL GORE has withdrawn from the campaign for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination, the media has rediscovered his virtues. The last time print and TV pundits wrote and spoke well of him was during the aftermath of the still-embittering five to four Supreme Court decision, when Gore conceded the election to George W. Bush without a trace of bitterness. After that concession, he retreated from the spotlight to teach, write, and do some business to support his family. Some of those same pundits criticized him for fading from public view and thus damaging his political prospects. But they failed to see that Gore's yearlong silence was a continuation of the deep patriotism he had exhibited in his concession. Gore realized that, in those first months after Bush's inauguration, any criticism from him would have been a sign to his supporters not to view the new president as their own. And so he refused to rouse partisan resentment in Bush's crucial first year. After September 11, in a gesture that Gore meant both symbolically and literally, he declared Bush to be his commander-in-chief. One can only wonder whether Bush himself—whose surrogates anonymously threatened in the days before the election not to accept a result in which their side won the popular vote but lost the electoral college—would have reacted the same way.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But these short bouts of praise have been the exception. No political figure in living memory has been as targeted by the media as Gore, so relentlessly ridiculed for offenses invented mostly by the media itself. Gore never really asserted, or even suggested, that he had created the Internet. He knows, first of all, that the Internet is not something that is, *mirabili dictu*, invented. What he actually did say—that he played a critical role in the *political* process that made way for the Web—isn't simply plausible; it's undeniable. Still, the ludicrous assertion that he had claimed scientific paternity gained such currency with TV pundits, who do nothing if not repeat themselves and emulate each other, that charging Gore with untruths became national sport. By contrast, Bush's big lie—that he could pass a massive tax cut without sending the country into fiscal distress—was largely ignored.

Some of this was ideological—hatched in the Fox News–*Wall Street Journal* editorial page–Rush Limbaugh echo chamber. We may never fully know how this right-wing onslaught influenced the campaign. And we may never know how anti-Gore bias influenced election night itself. No one has proved the stories of then–General Electric Chairman and CEO Jack Welch's election night machinations true—the stories that he pushed NBC (a General Electric property) into calling Florida for W. But no one has proved them false either. And certainly no one can any longer pretend that Welch is too ethical, or too public-spirited, to have done such a thing—not after the news reports that his lavish retirement benefits had General Electric shareholders funding his Louis XIV lifestyle.

And then there were the liberals—including Cokie Roberts, Chris Matthews, and many of the correspondents on the Gore plane. They savaged Gore as well, for reasons that are more intellectual than ideological. Take, for instance, Maureen Dowd—whose derision of Gore bordered on obsessive. What rankled her so incessantly, this columnist who has never written a serious or memorable word about public policy? I suspect it was Gore's seriousness. Yes, Gore takes himself seriously. He takes himself seriously because he considers himself a student of policy—on the environment, on national defense, on technology, on privacy. And he is. Unlike many of the pundits who ridicule him, Gore does not view these issues purely through the lens of political strategy or interest-group mobilization. Gore actually enjoys dealing with complex, technical questions of government. And he deals with them with sophistication and insight. As a result, he stretches the people who comment on him, and I suspect they find the whole process an imposition, if not a subtle reproach.

WITH GORE OUT of the running, an ambitious group of Democrats have the field to themselves. None of the contenders has as much popular support as Gore—who, after all, won more votes in 2000 than any presidential candidate in U.S. history except Ronald Reagan. But candidates like John Edwards and John Kerry have raised more money than Gore, which doesn't surprise me. One of the complaints leveled at Gore was that he wasn't skilled at flattering his contributors, or even thanking them. And I can testify that the charge is true. Given that big-money donors generally have big egos, that lack of stroking left many of them ready to defect, and now they can. So some of the new Democratic candidates may fare well in the living rooms of Los Angeles and New York. What remains to be seen is how they fare on the hustings in the swing states of Illinois, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin, which Gore won.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe said after Gore's renunciation that he was "a stand-up guy," something that could hardly be said of McAuliffe himself. (If Bush benefited suspiciously—but only with a few hundred thousand dollars—from the questionably timely sale of Harken Energy Corporation stock, McAuliffe benefited to the tune of $18 million from his suspicious sale of shares of Global Crossing.) For his part, Bill Clinton observed that Gore would have made a "fine" president. I cannot fathom whether this chintzy adjective was intended as a compliment. In any case, Gore and I part company in our assessment of Clinton's presidency. (And in our assessment of Clinton's post-presidency. I consider Clinton's recent assessment of the Democrats' drubbing at the polls—"When people feel uncertain, they'd rather have somebody who's strong and wrong than somebody who's weak and right"—a perfect illustration of our ex-president's amoral code.) In my view, Clinton shared a key weakness with another Democratic president, Jimmy Carter, and with his own private foreign policy retinue, Warren Christopher, Madeleine Albright, Anthony Lake, and Sandy Berger: his belief that one could make and trust in agreements with tyrant-aggressors who assault their neighbors and abuse their own people. That self-flattering naïveté is one reason North Korea is such a dangerous threat today. Gore didn't share that weakness. I have had political differences, even quarrels, with my friend Al Gore—the day before yesterday over affirmative action, only yesterday over Iraq. But, on national security, conceived both as interests and as a humanitarian concern, his record is abundant and abundantly clear. Unlike many in his party, he has long supported the defense expenditures necessary to sustain an advanced military and to counter the threat posed by unconventional weapons in the hands of unconventional menaces. Early on, he recognized the importance of cyber-defense. He pushed for tough new standards on airline safety before anyone (except, sadly, airline lobbyists) cared. He did the thankless work of helping disarm the ex-Soviet states. He was the tough guy on Iraq at the very dawn of the Clinton administration, and he was the most suspicious about Iran. From the beginning, he was without illusion about how Israel might—and ultimately would not—come to an accord with the Palestinians. Were it not for him, the Bosnians would have waited even longer for the intervention that restored some calm to Bosnia and to the rest of the former Yugoslavia. Were it left to him alone, Rwanda might not now be a statistic of 800,000 dead in the most terrible genocide since the Jewish catastrophe in Europe.

Gore was among the first "neoliberals" in Congress, among

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the first Democrats to grasp that excessive regulation and bureaucracy were throttling U.S. economic ingenuity. That's what, from early on, made him a hero and a candidate of both the Democratic and independent centers. But, more recently, he saw that the pendular swing first discerned as a pattern in U.S. history by Arthur M. Schlesinger Sr. had swung so far that the market had become a religion of indifference and greed. A child is not only left behind by an inhospitable school or an unprepared teacher; a child can be left behind by an uncaring society, indifferent to his health, to his parents' ordeal in the pursuit of work, and to his need for a safe and decent environment. Gore does not believe that these concerns amount to resentful populism. Without the restoration of governmental concern for those on the margins of the American dream, we will have no democratic capitalism.

With Gore's exit, the central structural problem in the Democratic Party is that its apparatus remains basically in the hands of Clinton and his acolytes. The Clintonites seem to be looking for a candidate, perhaps a sacrificial candidate, who will be compatible with Hillary Clinton's 2008 presidential ambitions, and not all the present aspirants fit their bill. But, regardless of who receives the nomination in Boston in August 2004, I suspect that many liberals and moderates will feel a wave of regret and nostalgia. Its object will be Gore. For, whatever his failings, Gore's insight into the future, his learning, his easy communion with the very brainy, his rapport with those outside the circle of plenty, and his vision of what a strong democracy needs to be and how it needs to act in the world make him a rare, incandescent light among his party's politicians. One day, with the benefit of hindsight, far more people will recognize that than do today. ■

London Dispatch

Fast Friends

By Elizabeth Rubin

"When you see divisiveness here," said one of the quiet Americans at the Iraqi opposition conference in London last week, "you're seeing long-standing divisions in the U.S. government." Judging from the off-the-record comments of the American observers, government officials, and handlers for the various groups in the Iraqi opposition, that division is over nothing less than the idea of redrawing the modern Middle East, shaped in the 1920s by the colonial powers. Those in favor see a war with Iraq as an opportunity to accomplish everything from redeeming America's foreign policy sins to creating a "free Baghdad that becomes a magnet for Arab democrats everywhere." These tend to be a combination of Pentagon policymakers, inspired with missionary zeal and the confidence of the most powerful military in history, and an array of Republican and Democratic advisers who've been quietly and not so quietly aiding the Iraqi opposition since the last Gulf war. Many are former anti-nation-builders now fueled by the fervor of the converted. They have embraced not only nation-building but region-building. Dressed in blue suits, they worked the halls and back rooms of the conference's Metropole Hotel. Their main man is Ahmed Chalabi, leader of the Iraqi National Congress (INC).

During a break on the first day, one quiet American gazed out the window at antiwar, anti-West demonstrators, mostly from Pakistan, who were shouting and holding up banners that read, BUSH AND BLAIR WANT AN IRAQI HAMID KARZAI and WE WANT KHALIFAH [an Islamic leader], NOT CAPITALISM. "Having lived in all these Arab countries," said the young American, "I know something's got to change. In Saudi Arabia, we, the Western middle classes, were just slaves to the Saudis because they believe they're God's chosen people." He agreed that anti-nation-builders have become the new nation-builders and said, "Are there suspect motives? No. I think people suddenly see the whole region as a threat to the U.S."

In the afternoon, as Iraqis from SCIRI, the Iranian-backed Supreme Council for Iraqi Revolution in Iraq, were giving speeches, I took a coffee break with another American who sees Iraq policy as a continuation of an interrupted agenda from the 1980s. "As painful as it can be in the short term, promotion of democracy is in our strategic interests," he said. "The Middle East is the only region that was exempt from our democracy promotion." He was referring, without irony, to the '80s, when, in spreading democracy, he said, "We reformed the El Salvadoran military while fighting an anti-communist insurgency." He spoke of how Iraq has the worst human rights record of any country since World War II and now deserves our help. In fact, he spoke the language of the left, the right, and the center, adopting it all. He was an old-time Republican, but Democrats at the conference were speaking in the same dialect.

At a press conference that afternoon, Kanan Makiya, one of the main authors of a draft report on Iraq's transition to democracy, was even more impassioned about the possibilities for a new world. "This report carries forward a completely new idea that doesn't belong anywhere in Arab Muslim culture. This is something tremendous." The report discusses the de-Baathification of Iraq, truth and reconciliation commissions, federalism, and minority rights, Makiya said. "It's a report in which a single united Iraq is brought into being."

Of course there were many Iraqis skeptical of the grand mission, who worried the conference was intended merely as a publicity stunt to complete the triangle needed for war—the U.N. resolution, the congressional approval, and now a united front from the Iraqi opposition. Ultimately, they said, decisions will be made by the Bush administration.

Elizabeth Rubin covered the war in Afghanistan for The New Republic.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For the young generation of Iraqi exiles who attended the meeting and have just started a website to gather their peers, however, U.S. directorship is a price they're willing to pay to go home. One of these exiles is Yasser Alaskary, a clean-shaven young man with a British accent, born while his mother was hiding from Saddam Hussein's secret police. "Very few people outside Iraq understand the extent of the suffering, the constant living in fear in every aspect of life. Because of the way the regime works, and because of old politics in the 1980s, it's impossible for the Iraqi people to overthrow Saddam on their own," Alaskary said. "But of course people are afraid of U.S. intentions. We know it is not for the Iraqi people. Our interests meet only on the removal of Saddam. There is a notion they are trying to establish democracy in the whole region. At the same time, they might want to rule by the military."

Three days later, after endless discussions, the Iraqi delegates were frustrated and denigrated the 65-member committee created at the conference to shape Iraq's future. Some said the Americans are making a big and dangerous mistake letting SCIRI represent the Shia. Over a beer at one of the hotel's many cafés, the quietest of the U.S. lobbyists looked disappointed that, although many in the Bush administration strongly advocate certain policies, the president has not chosen a path. Time's up, he said, for the dictators in the Middle East—he believes passionately that years of corrupt Middle East policy have sapped America's true character. "But there are institutional forces fighting change," he said. "You have different agendas in the U.S. government, and they've each reached out to parts of the Iraqi opposition," further dividing a fractious group. The State Department and the CIA, he explained, are trying to cut down the INC because it's seen as too close to the Department of Defense, while Defense strongly supports the INC. "State ... doesn't want to talk about changing governments. The CIA objects because they consider the Middle East to be their last playground," he continued. "Then [there is] the oil industry who pay the lobbyists, and they certainly don't want to talk about" changing regimes, he said, working himself up. "We don't need their oil, their money. And maybe Pat Buchanan is right, we should just go home. These poor Iraqis are nice people whose future is one hundred percent in our hands." ■

Why the Bush administration is worse than DiIulio said.

Special K

By JONATHAN CHAIT

WHEN PRESIDENT BUSH appointed a successor to Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neill earlier this month, a handful of news outlets (this magazine included) pointed out that the identity of Bush's pick was essentially irrelevant to economic policy-making. The policies that new Treasury Secretary John Snow will be asked to sell to the public—tax cuts, tax cuts, and more tax cuts—have already been crafted without any need for his input, thank you very much. Indeed, the fact that policymakers in the Bush administration have been reduced essentially to an ornamental role was spelled out explicitly in an article by reporter Ron Suskind in the January issue of *Esquire*. In the piece, former administration staffer John DiIulio, along with two anonymous White House officials, alleged that the White House has totally subsumed its policymaking to its political decisions. "There is no precedent in any modern White House for what is going on in this one: a complete lack of a policy apparatus," DiIulio told Suskind. "What you've got is everything—and I mean everything—being run by the political arm." Lest anybody doubt DiIulio's analysis, a column on *National Review Online* by Republican economist Bruce Bartlett affirmed it. "[O]ne cannot dispute [DiIulio's] characterization because it clearly is true. Since the beginning of the Bush administration, insiders have complained to me that the policymaking process was not working," Bartlett wrote. "This vacuum in terms of policy analysis has tended to be filled by those in the White House who look at issues solely in terms of their political implications."

Suskind's explanation for this disturbing and unprecedented state of affairs is straightforward: The power wielded by political adviser Karl Rove (whether you believe he wields it for good or ill) is so great that he simply eclipses any other influence in the administration. "I was still regarding this White House in terms of the long-standing model," Suskind writes, "in which the art of political strategy is carefully balanced against serious policy discussion, in which church-state separations of these two distinct functions are respected, even championed. It seemed that in the person of Karl Rove such distinctions had been blurred."

But the total dominance of politics over policy in the Bush administration is not merely a function of personality; it is a reflection of deeper structural forces. Put simply, the administration is subservient to economic pressure groups to an extent that surpasses any administration in modern history.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Whereas the Clinton administration was regularly forced to weigh policy demands from competing interests within the Democratic coalition, the Bush administration's presumptive allegiance in virtually every case is to corporate America. It is simply unnecessary for the White House to generate its own policies because that role has been filled by business lobbyists. Bush has abdicated to K Street the basic functions of domestic governance, not merely in cases where K Street's interests run roughshod over liberal principles, but in cases where they contradict conservative principles as well. Indeed, the simple rule for understanding Bush's economic policy is that in virtually every instance, whether tacking right or left, the president sides with whatever interest group has the strongest stake in the issue at hand. The result is an administration whose domestic actions persistently, almost uniformly, fail to uphold the broader public good.

One might wonder why the Clinton administration was not captive to its economic supporters while the Bush administration is. The answer isn't, as some Clintonites have suggested, that the denizens of the previous White House possessed more moral courage than their successors. It's the deep asymmetry between the two parties' financial support. The Republicans receive support from business or from groups, such as the religious right, that don't oppose business's agenda. (Pat Robertson may not have any special passion for, say, protecting offshore tax havens, but he won't denounce them, either.) Democrats, by contrast, draw financial support from a broader range of interests—from corporate America, too, but also from labor, environmentalists, consumer groups, trial lawyers, and other associations whose agendas regularly conflict with those of business.

One way to think about this dynamic is a political science theory called democratic pluralism. Pluralism was a way of describing, and justifying, the system that emerged after World War II. The most active players in the political system of the 1950s and 1960s were large organizations like the United States Chamber of Commerce and the AFL-CIO. Even though these pressure groups wielded far more influence than everyday citizens, pluralism theory held that most citizens' interests were adequately accounted for anyway, because the various pressure groups represented them by proxy. Political scientists applied this theory to the U.S. political system as a whole, but currently it's a decent model only for the Democratic Party. That is, since Democrats must listen to representatives of business, labor, consumers, and others, the consensus that it reaches is usually a pretty good reflection of the broader good. But Republicans, whose base represents just a narrow elite sliver of the economy, usually fail to take account of the broader interest.

This dynamic does not apply to cultural issues—Republicans are no more subservient to the whims of social conservatives than Democrats are to social liberals. Nor does it apply to foreign policy, where both parties make policy largely free from the influence of organized special interests. And, while it should be noted that the Democratic Party as a whole draws from a variety of economic interests, individual Democratic politicians do not. In the Senate, for instance, New York Democrat Charles Schumer is essentially a tool of the financial industry; Louisiana's John Breaux, the oil and gas industry; Michigan's Carl Levin, the auto industry; and so on. But the diversity of, and lack of agreement between, these interests generally allows a Democratic administration to transcend this sort of parochialism. Conservatives attack the Democrats as beholden to unions and other left-wing special interests. Meanwhile, leftists like Ralph Nader attack it as having sold out its union and liberal allies for the embrace of business. They're both half right: Being beholden to everybody means being beholden to nobody.

This can be seen in the behavior of the Clinton administration. At the time, the president's dogged pursuit of soft money was seen both by liberals and conservatives as the apex of political sleaze. But, in fact, the breadth of Bill Clinton's fund-raising is precisely what insulated his decision-making from undue influence. In 1993, Clinton infuriated his labor allies, but pleased his business backers, by lobbying for and signing NAFTA. In 1995, he delighted trial lawyers, but angered lobbyists for business (especially in the Democrat-friendly technology industry), by vetoing a GOP-backed bill making it more difficult for investors to sue based on misleading financial reports. As surpluses emerged in the last few years of his term, Clinton stymied both the tax-cutting urges of his business allies and the spending urges of his labor allies by insisting on debt reduction. The point is not that Clinton got every policy decision right but that the discordant nature of his support put him in a position where, on most issues, it was at least *possible* for him to make a detached judgment on the merits. That is precisely what Bush cannot do.

The extent of the Bush administration's bond with the lobbyists of K Street is necessarily hidden from public view, since neither party to the relationship has any incentive to publicize it. But a sense of it can be gleaned from stories like the one that appeared in *The Wall Street Journal* last January. "Top administration officials," the *Journal* reported, "led by political adviser Karl Rove, have been meeting with industry lobbyists in recent weeks seeking input on the president's 2002 agenda." The article proceeded to detail the ways in which corporate America's wish list coincided with Bush's agenda for that year.

In fact, if you look at the major economic issues of the Bush presidency, in every instance Bush's position has been identical to that of whichever interest group applied the heaviest political pressure. On behalf of the accounting industry he fought tooth-and-nail against audit reform, until a 99 to zero Senate vote overwhelmed his opposition. (And, after the heat was off, Bush weakened the new auditing oversight board and reneged on his promise to boost the Securities and Exchange Commission's budget.) His energy bill was written in consultation with energy producers and reflected their desires almost perfectly. In signing legislation to overturn

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

workplace ergonomic standards and supporting tougher bankruptcy standards on consumers, he fulfilled longtime corporate demands by using a broad-based corporate coalition. He fought campaign finance reform until opposition grew politically untenable, and even now his appointees to the Federal Election Commission are helping gut it. His telecommunications position preserved the monopoly status of local cable providers. His positions on prescription drugs and a patients' bill of rights were the positions of the drug industry and HMOs, respectively. He supported the oil companies in their quest to drill in Alaska and the auto companies in their disdain for higher fuel-efficiency standards. When, after the September 11 attacks, private airline security firms enlisted a massive lobbying effort to keep their contracts, Bush supported them (until that, too, became politically unsupportable). In none of these cases did organizations representing those affected by these policies—labor, environment, or consumer organizations—receive any meaningful hearing.

Paradoxically, the only major issue on which Bush exerted any discipline upon K Street was his tax cut. And even that was done in the spirit of mutual interest. Bush decided that if lobbyists loaded up the tax cut with business tax breaks, the entire thing might sink from its own weight. And so, business was persuaded to line up behind a tax cut that left corporate rates untouched—forming a "tax-relief coalition" that raised millions to press for the bill's passage—with the promise that subsequent bills would directly give corporations their long-sought breaks. (To be sure, corporate executives, as highly compensated individuals, would have benefited disproportionately from Bush's income tax cuts even if they hadn't been followed by corporate tax relief.) And indeed, last winter, Bush unsuccessfully pushed for a package of business breaks under the guise of "stimulus," and he is preparing to do so yet again this year.

It is often on the smaller issues, which receive almost no public attention, where the influence of lobbyists can be seen most clearly. There are countless such case studies, but, rather than slogging through all of them, consider just one: the Research and Experimentation Tax Credit. This was created in 1981 in order to reward companies whose product research generated broader scientific benefits. Alas, as Robert S. McIntyre of Citizens for Tax Justice has written, companies quickly claimed the credit for researching products with no merit whatsoever, such as Chicken McNuggets. In 1997, the Clinton Treasury Department imposed a new regulation restricting the credit to actual scientific advances. But, when Bush took office, his Treasury Department quickly rescinded it. Mark Weinberger, Bush's Assistant Secretary of the Treasury for Tax Policy at the time, had served as a tax lobbyist immediately prior to joining the administration. His clients included the R&E Tax Credit Coalition, which represented corporations seeking to preserve this particular scam. Early in his tenure, Weinberger described his goal to the *Journal* thusly: "I want to change the 'us versus them' mentality—the 'us' being government, the 'them' being business."

That line would serve as an appropriate epigram for Bush's governing philosophy. Since he's taken office, government and business have melded together as one big "us." Scores of mid-level appointees, like Weinberger, oversee industries for which they once worked. Deputy Interior Secretary J. Steven Griles is a former coal-bed methane lobbyist. Interior Department Solicitor William Geary Myers III previously lobbied to preserve federal grazing subsidies. Assistant Secretary of Energy for Fossil Energy Carl Michael Smith came to government from the oil industry and told one oil and gas group that his job is to determine "how best to utilize taxpayer dollars to the benefit of industry." The prevalence of such appointees is a stark departure from the previous administration. "Clinton weighed factors other than whether you contributed significantly to his campaign," explains G. Calvin MacKenzie, who studies presidential appointees for the Brookings Institution.

It has become common under Bush not only for appointees to move easily between pleading for industry and adjudicating such pleadings but to do both simultaneously. Republican National Committee (RNC) Chairman Marc Racicot not only comes from K Street (which is hardly unprecedented for either party) but proposed to continue his lobbying work while serving as party chairman. The unpleasant symbolism of this forced Racicot to reverse himself, but the real scandal wasn't that his lobbying would conflict with his chairmanship of the RNC—it was that it wouldn't. Last year, Enron Chairman Kenneth L. Lay privately promised to support keeping the chairman of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) if he would reverse his stance on energy regulation—implying that Lay had veto power over the FERC chairmanship. My colleague Jonathan Cohn reported in these pages last week that two members of the Advisory Committee on Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention were solicited for their positions not by the Bush administration but by the lead industry itself (see "Toxic," December 23). That is, lobbyists have in some instances literally taken over the responsibilities of governing.

BUSH'S DEFENDERS WOULD no doubt maintain that it's only natural that a conservative president regularly sides with business, which usually desires less taxation and regulation. It's true that, in most instances, conservative ideology and business self-interest both militate toward the same end. Yet no disinterested conservative ideology would take the form of Bush's actual mix of policies. His energy bill, proposing massive new production subsidies, earned disdain from free-market purists like *National Review* and the Cato Institute. Bush has quietly acquiesced to congressional pork, declining to veto a single spending bill. Meanwhile, he has cut funding for programs—such as recovery of loose radioactive material—that many conservatives support but that lack powerful constituencies. Back in the 1980s, Ronald Reagan's Budget Director David Stockman pledged to attack "weak claims, not weak clients." Bush has done just the opposite.

One of the great perversities of Bush's domestic policy is that, when he does deviate from conservatism, he follows this

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

same pattern—that is, he tacks left not because it is in the broad public interest but because it will please a narrow but powerful special interest. Take, for example, the three domestic policy decisions for which he has taken the most flak from free-market conservatives: support for farm subsidies and for tariffs on steel and textiles. In each case, Bush acquiesced to the demands of a small, organized minority whose interests clearly run contrary to those of the majority. Studies have found that every job saved by tariffs costs consumers $800,000 in higher prices. Farm subsidies are even less justifiable: They artificially deluge the agriculture industry and transfer money to relatively affluent farmers by boosting the price of food, which disproportionately hurts the poor. Note that in all those instances Clinton managed to stand up to the special pleaders, despite the fact that acquiescing would have been more compatible with his ideology than it was with Bush's.

Perhaps the most important common element of Bush's leftward lurches is that they involve adopting positions through which he can win favor with a Democratic-leaning pressure group without running up against business interests. For instance, Bush has embraced scandal-tarred carpenters' union President Douglas McCarron and Teamsters President James P. Hoffa—this despite the fact that GOP opposition to organized labor is frequently explained by aversion to "corrupt union bosses." So why has Bush cozied up to two of the more controversial bosses around? Because, as my colleague John B. Judis has pointed out, whereas most union leaders' top priorities involve winning concessions from employers, both McCarron and Hoffa are equally concerned with having the administration help them with internal issues—in McCarron's case, squelching a court case brought by reformers within the union (see "Drill Sergeant," December 16); in Hoffa's, lifting the Independent Review Board that oversees the union as a result of past transgressions (see "Dirty Deal," April 1 & 8, 2002).

THE ONLY FACTOR that clearly mitigates Bush's embrace of an agenda set by the business sector is his own sense of political self-preservation. After all, if the administration is publicly discredited as shilling for K Street, then it will be less effective at shilling for K Street. This is where Rove comes in. Sometimes half-measures (say, an industry-friendly prescription-drug plan) must be embraced to stave off more sweeping changes. Other times full retreat (as on airport security) is required in order to avoid a p.r. debacle. Hence Bush approved offshore drilling in politically marginal California but not in politically crucial Florida. This is also the reason that Bush has not endorsed some of the business lobby's more politically unattainable goals, such as complete abolition of the corporate income tax. This caution should not be mistaken for principled independence.

But caution has generally proved to be unnecessary for this White House because the public so rarely has focused upon Bush's domestic agenda. The reason for this lies in another phenomenon of political science: Bad policies can exist when they have concentrated benefits and diffuse costs. For instance, the public should be outraged at steel tariffs, but in fact most people are not because the cost to each individual is very low. The people who care the most about steel tariffs are those who work in the steel industry, and they're all for tariffs. Likewise, few people have any desire to run long-term deficits in order to provide a large tax cut for the affluent. But the people who stand to gain the most from such tax cuts tend to appreciate them a great deal, and they express their appreciation, among other ways, in the form of political donations that can be used to help convince the majority that the tax cuts are actually aimed at them.

On virtually every issue that has come before him, Bush has sided with the intense preferences of the well-organized minority. Judging from his lofty polls and his bulging coffers, the strategy has worked brilliantly. In a democracy, of course, you can never completely discount the possibility that the majority will eventually focus on the fact that it is getting persistently fleeced. From what we've seen of Karl Rove, though, he doesn't appear very worried. ■

Why conservatives will hate Lott's successor, too.

Hatchet Job

By NOAM SCHEIBER

IN THE SUMMER of 1999, Trent Lott cut what seemed like a fair good deal with his Democratic counterpart, Senate Minority Leader Tom Daschle. For weeks, Democrats had been holding up the Senate's work on a number of appropriations bills—bills the GOP hoped would force Bill Clinton to make politically treacherous decisions about tax cuts and spending. So, in exchange for Daschle's promise to let the appropriations bills move forward, Lott allowed Democrats to bring up 20 amendments to a soon-to-be-debated HMO reform bill.

Conservatives were apoplectic. Despite their eagerness to make Clinton sweat on tax cuts, they argued that even allowing votes on the amendments—whether or not they passed—amounted to a Judas-like betrayal; they complained that Lott had "given away the store." Many even took to referring to Lott derisively as Daschle's "assistant majority leader."

It is by now an open secret that if Lott doesn't survive the next few weeks as majority leader, his views on racial integration will only have been a proximate cause. His more serious offense will be what conservatives have for years viewed as his weak commitment to their ideological agenda. As *National Review* fumed when it called for Lott's head after the Republicans' disappointing midterm showing in 1998, "Conservatives should encourage [Oklahoma Senator Don] Nickles to make the—admittedly risky—challenge against Lott. Someone must be held responsible for the continued

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

drift of the congressional party." Regarding the current controversy, *Weekly Standard* editor Bill Kristol recently told the *Los Angeles Times*, "If [Lott] were an effective leader or personally popular, he would have weathered this easily."

But, while it's true that Lott isn't the most popular senator around, he is clearly a conservative—as reliable a vote against partial-birth abortion, gun control, and (surprise!) hate-crimes legislation as you'll find in the Senate. And, though one can imagine a more skilled politician faring marginally better in his backroom dealings with Senate Democrats, it's tough to imagine how Machiavelli himself could have accomplished much without making some real concessions. After all, the rules of the Senate make it practically impossible to push any measure through a closely divided chamber without compromise. Which begs the question, is it Lott that conservatives hate so much? Or is it the role of Senate majority leader itself?

Some of the epithets conservatives toss at Lott today sound remarkably similar to those they once used to describe Bob Dole and Howard Baker, the only other two Republican Senate majority leaders of the modern conservative era. Though Baker had loyally shepherded Ronald Reagan's tax cuts and defense buildup through the Senate—earning him the designation of "spear carrier" for Reagan's agenda—conservatives never forgave him for brokering the deal in 1978 that ceded control of the Panama Canal to Panama. Nor did they appreciate Baker's foot-dragging on controversial social issues, such as constitutional amendments to ban abortion and school busing, and in favor of school prayer. After announcing early in 1981 that he would delay consideration of these measures to focus on the president's economic agenda—which was going to require all the goodwill he could muster—a coalition of conservative activists released a statement saying, "It is shocking that Sen. Baker would ask the many Members of Congress who ran on the 'social issue' agenda to now do nothing and violate their promises to their constituencies."

The right considered the harder-nosed Dole a refreshing change when he succeeded Baker in 1985. *The New York Times* noted that July that "conservatives seem rejuvenated these days, and one of the key reasons is Senator Dole." "He's willing to bring up these items he knows we've fought for over the years," Orrin Hatch gushed to the paper, referring to Dole's promise to push for constitutional amendments giving the president a line-item veto and requiring a balanced budget, issues dear to conservative hearts.

But, as with Baker, Dole had long since fallen out of favor by the time he left the Senate. When Dole, who had prided himself on his deficit-hawk credentials, questioned whether the Senate would accept the $245 billion tax cut that House Republicans were pushing in 1995, conservatives showered him with scorn, going so far as to label him the "tax collector for the welfare state." And conservatives became furious during the internal GOP debate over welfare reform, when Dole's longtime chief of staff, Sheila Burke, whom the Kansas senator had deputized to negotiate a deal, initially balked at a provision that would have punished out-of-wedlock pregnancies.

Throughout the early '90s, Lott was frequently touted as an alternative to the wayward Dole. "Back-bench Republican senators, unhappy with Minority Leader Robert J. Dole's handling of health care and Whitewater, are proposing that a reluctant Sen. Trent Lott of Mississippi challenge him for re-election as leader," Bob Novak reported in 1994. And, as he ran for the majority leader post in 1996, Lott seemed well-positioned to avoid Dole's fate. "Lott used to be extremely popular with the conservatives. Not only did he vote right, he spoke out," recalls one conservative activist.

But Lott proved to be no more successful than his predecessors at satisfying conservatives once he actually got the job. Some believe he suffered even more because of the expectations that greeted his ascendance. "Since Lott came from the conservative wing of the party, the expectation to perform was much higher," says a Republican lobbyist. Whatever the case, Lott's honeymoon was brief. By early 1997, conservatives were screaming bloody murder that Lott was dealing with the Clinton administration on the Chemical Weapons Convention, a treaty ratified under his stewardship. Heritage Foundation founder Paul Weyrich even compared Lott's handling of the issue to Baker's betrayal on the Panama Canal 20 years earlier. Then, that fall, conservatives began their annual moaning over Republican budget negotiations with the White House and claimed Lott was selling them out. By 1998, they were so upset with Lott's budget backsliding that they demanded a task force to advise him on how not to get rolled by the White House. In 1999, conservatives piled on when Lott failed to beat back a measure to require background checks for sales at gun shows, which narrowly passed the Senate.

Certainly a more skillful leader might have avoided some of these pitfalls. But, in retrospect, Lott's political instincts have saved conservatives from themselves more often than not. In 1998, House conservatives argued that Lott should have forced another government shutdown rather than compromise with Clinton on the budget. But surely another shutdown would have only hurt Republicans, as it did in 1995–1996. Likewise, conservatives worked themselves into a lather over Lott's early reluctance to flog Clinton's affair with Monica Lewinsky during the 1998 campaign—and, more amazingly, over his decision to soft-sell Senate impeachment proceedings after the election. Given what we know about how big a loser the issue was for Republicans—arguably costing them five seats in the House—it seems there could hardly have been a worse idea.

Lott's problems, it turns out, didn't have to do with his effectiveness as a leader, at least not by any objective measure, so much as a structural feature of the conservative movement. Lott, Dole, Baker—it has never really mattered. The right wing of the Republican Party is simply incapable of accepting the kind of compromises a Senate majority leader must make. Dole understood this before anyone. "Give [Lott]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a year up there, and people will say I was a right-winger," Dole reportedly told his friend, former Reagan aide Lyn Nofziger, according to an article in *The American Prospect*.

Part of the problem for Lott—and, for that matter, any Republican leader—is that, unlike interest groups on the left, which tend to accept the transactional nature of government, many movement conservatives have a genuinely coherent worldview they want to see reflected—in its entirety. The National Organization for Women is content to derail an anti-abortion judicial nominee; the trial lawyers are happy if they can beat back tort reform; labor wants to impose restrictions on trade. But no one group cares enough about the others' issues to go to the mat for them, giving a savvy legislator like Tom Daschle room to assemble a coalition of support in any given debate. Movement conservatives like Gary Bauer, on the other hand, by definition aren't satisfied to simply see the Chemical Weapons Convention defeated or see a ban on partial-birth abortions. Losing on any issue is enough to rouse their anger.

To make things even more difficult for a Republican leader, this ideological cohesion is reinforced by a level of practical coordination unmatched by anything on the left. Of course there are divisions among conservatives—for example, between social conservatives and economic libertarians. But by and large, says conservative activist Grover Norquist, "Nobody on the right wants anything at the expense of anyone else on the right. ... We can all agree to leave each other alone." That helps explain why, over the last three decades, conservatives have been able to create institutions that fuse the different factions into a single movement: think tanks like the Heritage Foundation, magazines like *The American Spectator*. Meanwhile, activists like Norquist, whose Americans for Tax Reform hosts a weekly meeting of corporate lobbyists and social conservatives called the "Wednesday Group," and Ralph Reed, the former Christian Coalition director famous for putting his grassroots evangelical network in the service of corporate interests, bring together the different factions in ways that maximize their overall strength. The downside for a party leader is that when one element of the coalition is unhappy, it quickly infects the others.

And Republican leaders have suffered from the demands of the right ever more intensely, ironically, as conservatives have gotten their way. The more the conservative agenda becomes either mainstream or law—welfare reform, vouchers, the Bush tax cut, Social Security privatization—the further to the right conservatives typically have to move in search of new ideas—medical savings accounts and, most recently, raising taxes on the poor. These days, conservatives have moved further toward the fringe intellectually, but they remain near the height of their power politically. It's not hard to see how that would put a Republican leader in a nearly impossible position when it came time to get results.

Of course, these constraints apply to anyone who governs from the right, not just the Republican Senate leader. Even Newt Gingrich, just four years earlier considered the darling of the conservative movement, was hounded out of office in late 1998 in part because his supporters deemed him too soft. But, in the House, it's at least possible to ram through your agenda with a paper-thin majority. In the Senate, by contrast, you need 60 votes to get anything done, and the modern Republican Party has never enjoyed that luxury. For its part, a Republican White House has so many ways to appease conservatives other than legislation—appointments, executive orders, foreign policy—that it rarely finds itself feeling the brunt of conservative frustration. But the only tool available to a Senate leader intent on soothing hard feelings is pork—which, needless to say, is not exactly the best way to appease the anti-government crowd. Just ask Lott, who in 1998 received a Citizens Against Government Waste "Oinker" award for his troubles. "Mr. Lott's main contribution so far as Senate leader has been to deliver pork to Mississippi," *The Wall Street Journal*'s Paul Gigot complained that year.

As Lott's grip on his job has grown increasingly tenuous over the last couple of days, guessing his eventual successor has naturally become Washington's semi-official parlor

THOMAS FUCHS

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

game. The names of up-and-coming Tennessee Senator Bill Frist, Pennsylvania conservative Rick Santorum, and incoming Majority Whip Mitch McConnell have all been thrown around as potential candidates. But so far the only person to indicate any interest in taking the job is Don Nickles, Lott's longtime whip, who ruffled some feathers last week with what some saw as his rank opportunism. In fact, these hard feelings are frequently cited as a threat to Nickles's ambitions. But maybe that's a little shortsighted. Why would Republicans want to give the job to anyone they felt warmly about? ■

The strange return of Gary Hart.

Comeback Kids

By MICHELLE COTTLE

BOSTON

THE SMALL, WOODEN table threatens to overflow with the reading materials my two lunch companions have brought along to edify me: books, magazine articles, political brochures, memos, resumés, a grant proposal. The waitress stops by to inform us that beef lasagna is the special of the day, but it's clear food isn't of primary interest to our little trio, as the guys lean in to read me highlighted passages of text. It's a chilly Friday afternoon, and Will Polkinghorn and Antwaun Smith—Harvard University graduate students in medicine and Chinese religion, respectively—are finished with classes for the week. But forget collapsing into the weekend. A break from school just means the two friends can turn their attentions to the extracurricular project that increasingly consumes their time and enthusiasm: Laying the groundwork for another presidential run by former Senator Gary Hart.

"For this to move from private thoughts to private conversations and now to be reading and hearing about it in the national dialogue," Polkinghorn begins, before pausing and waving his hands for emphasis: "It's been an immense amount of work—an *immense* amount of work." "The scary part has been not wanting to make mistakes," says Smith, adding that what has kept them moving forward is the belief that Hart is a man of ideas who will provide an invaluable voice and vision in the 2004 debate. "When you learn about the American political system in the third grade," explains Polkinghorn, "Gary's the type of guy that you hope will run for office."

For official Washington, the buzz about a possible Hart resurrection erupted on November 3, when George Stephanopoulos told viewers of ABC's "This Week" that early talks were underway. But the gears first began turning back in March, when Polkinghorn and Smith, who befriended Hart in 2000 when all three were attending Oxford University, started pressing their pal and political idol to save a moribund Democratic Party from itself. "They were the catalyst," says a Hart veteran close to the situation. "They were able to outline to him a rationale for how and why Gary should reenter politics." Phone calls were exchanged, memos drawn up, and lists compiled. Though Hart has yet to commit, his unofficial team is now organizing a series of policy speeches for him to deliver starting in January. And, if Hart does ultimately charge onto the Democratic primary field, both those who cheer his return and those who regard it as the punch line to a long-defunct political career can point the finger at two Harvard grad students who, for all their idealism, admit to knowing absolutely nothing about the political world into which they are tumbling. Call it Will and Antwaun's Excellent Adventure.

THE ADVENTURE BEGAN during the 2000 presidential race, which Polkinghorn and Smith observed from the safe remove of England, where both were second-year Rhodes scholars. "It was just the time," explains Polkinghorn, a lanky, pink-cheeked 26-year-old with wide, pale eyes and a wave of sandy hair tipped in white. "We had all this time to talk, to read ... to surf the Internet. You were almost concerned that you weren't doing anything, but, looking back, we developed in a way we wouldn't have otherwise." "It was a pivotal moment," agrees Smith, a 27-year-old African American from Missouri who presents a perfect cinematic contrast to his sunny, California chum: dark where Polkinghorn is fair, low-key where he is unconstrained.

Senator John McCain's message of government ethics and campaign finance reform had gotten the friends hooked on politics and thinking about ways to change it for the better. (The boys are flat-out crazy for McCain, says Hart. "When I told them, 'Oh, I've known John for twenty years,' they were like, 'What?! You know *John McCain*?!'") Smith recalls that he had just finished reading *What it Takes*, Richard Ben Cramer's magisterial walk through the 1988 election, when he passed Hart strolling down High Street. It seems that Hart—who has spent his post-political years practicing law, teaching, writing, and serving on the occasional commission—had decided to go back to school to write a book/thesis about the ideals of the Jeffersonian republic in modern America. Smith thought he recognized

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the one-time candidate from a recent photo in *USA Today*—he even called out to the senator, softly, to see if he would turn around—but then assumed there was no way Hart would be wandering alone down High Street, thousands of miles from home and family. Upon second sighting, however, Smith introduced himself, and the two arranged an outing.

"We had dinner at this place called the King's Arms, a four-hundred-year-old pub where a lot of students gather," recalls Hart in a phone interview from his Denver office. "I liked him a lot. He was just this idealistic young person." The pair agreed to dine again, this time with Polkinghorn, and then yet again with Manuel Montoya, another Rhodes recipient. The four quickly became fast friends, meeting at the pub on Saturdays for dinner, then wandering over to Häagen-Dazs for dessert. Gradually, the young men absorbed Hart into their wider circle of classmates, and he became one of the boys. "I didn't notice an age difference at all," the 66-year-old Hart volunteers, noting that he has "always tried to keep my mind and spirit young." Come Thanksgiving, Hart even whipped up a feast for the group at his flat, replete with stuffed pheasant and apple pie.

This merry fellowship of students discussed movies, books, world affairs, and, of course, U.S. politics. Hart shared with his young friends his thoughts on national security, the economy, and governance in general. "I learned a lot from them, and I think they learned a bit from me—though I'm not sure," the senator says modestly. Polkinghorn describes Hart's effect more extravagantly: "Our evolution into political mindfulness was strongly influenced by Gary."

After Oxford, Smith resumed his interrupted studies at Harvard, Polkinghorn enrolled in Harvard's medical school, and both kept in touch with Hart. It wasn't until March of this year, however, that Polkinghorn had his epiphany. "I was jogging in Brookline, Massachusetts—which is where the med school is—and I had this crazy idea," he recalls. "I called Antwaun and said, 'Here's this crazy idea, and it's so weird that no one's talking about this. Gary would be an ideal person to address these issues.'" The two immediately began enumerating arguments for a Hart presidency. Polkinghorn took notes. Smith began crafting memos. Convinced of the rightness of their plan, Polkinghorn left Hart a phone message to call him ASAP, then he headed home for spring break. "One day, I was walking on the beach in Santa Monica," says Polkinghorn, "and I got this call from him literally on the beach. I said, 'Gary, I don't have my notes in front of me; but sit down, and just listen to this, and tell me what you think.'"

AS HART TELLS it, Polkinghorn blurted out his big idea as if he were proposing nothing more radical than breakfast at Denny's: "'I was out jogging this morning and thinking about the country, and you gotta run for president.'" Hart's response? "I started laughing and said, 'Will, sober up.'" But Hart's young supporters had made up their minds. The guys began phoning and e-mailing their chosen candidate regularly, detailing why he had to run, as well as the challenges that would need to be overcome. "They just hammered and hammered and hammered," says Hart. They praised his passion, his experience, his commitment to public service, and, of course, his governing vision—heady stuff for a publicly disgraced pol who, a few years back, had griped to *The New Yorker* that no one wanted to hear what he had to say anymore. Smith first exploratory memo to Hart was organized on the SWOT principle popular with strategic planners and MBA types: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Hart promptly fired back with a two-pager titled "Thoughts on Governance in the Early 21st Century."

Even as they worked on the candidate, Polkinghorn and Smith began contacting former Hart operatives, current Democratic leaders, and big-foot political journalists, soliciting opinions and advice. The responses, they say, were overwhelmingly encouraging. "The worst case was skepticism," says Polkinghorn. "The mean case was curiosity. And the best case was unbridled enthusiasm." The generally positive feedback, he says, "has fueled us along the way." And, at some point, Hart began to see his friends' draft efforts as more than just a lark. "I think initially he dismissed them," says the Hart veteran. "But the more he saw of what was going on in the party and in the country, and the more he saw and talked to the guys, the more he thought, 'Perhaps this is the next generation of folks like we were in 1984.'"

When discussing the young men's activities on his behalf, Hart shrewdly takes care to neither dismiss their "strange effort" nor appear as though he takes it too seriously. "They never ask my approval on anything," he chuckles. "When they called to tell me that they had talked to a whole lot of reporters, I said, 'You did what?!'" At their age, he says, "I would no more have thought of calling up David Broder than I would have tried to fly. But they take this very seriously and, therefore, think other people take it seriously as well." Polkinghorn's call to Stephanopoulos, in fact, was what shoved Hart's presidential musings into the realm of national debate. "After the fact, Will called and told me about his conversation with Stephanopoulos. I was laughing so hard I almost fell out of my chair," says Hart with obvious warmth. "I laughed at the audacity of it."

This fearlessness and idealism is clearly what Hart adores most about his young friends/possible future campaign workers. (The starry-eyed hero worship probably doesn't hurt either.) "They just don't know the meaning of the word 'no' or 'problem,'" he marvels. "It's really refreshing to see people that idealistic and that optimistic and just not deterred by anything—the meanness or the money or any of the hurdles. The older you get, you begin to see life as hurdles, and that's what constrains you. What's so wonderful about young people is they don't see that."

IN A WAY, it's unsurprising that a Hart '04 movement would spring from the minds of two twenty-something grad students. For older Americans, the name Gary Hart typically prompts off-color jokes about the political perils of "Monkey Business." My Boston cabdriver, for instance, roaringly referred to Hart as "philandering Gary" and suggested that Gary Condit would make the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

perfect running mate. But Polkinghorn and Smith were preteens when the Donna Rice episode turned Hart into a national joke and forced his withdrawal from the 1988 race. To these young men, Hart is simply "a man of ideas" and "a twenty-first century patriot."

The two are at pains, moreover, to have me understand that they're not the only ones who feel this way, or at least soon will. "This isn't my idea," effuses Polkinghorn. "It isn't Antwaun's idea. It's *America's* idea." Among the most important lessons Hart taught them, say the friends, is that politics should never be seen as an end in itself—that ideas should come before political strategy. "To my mind, the first part of any primary process is the primary of ideas," says Polkinghorn. "And, if someone has won that primary of ideas, it seems perfectly logical to me that you want that person to be your leader."

Polkinghorn and Smith aren't big, however, on discussing the specific ideas that will lead Hart to his primary victory. Instead, they suggest I flip through the stack of the senator's books they have provided. Polkinghorn has brought *Restoration of the Republic*, the product of Hart's years at Oxford, which calls for a resurgence in civic involvement and grassroots political activity to restore the health of our nation. It includes a plan for retooling the National Guard into an army of citizen soldiers dedicated to homeland security. Indeed, Hart's thoughts on national security have been of particular interest to his young friends since the September 11 attacks, and for that reason Smith offers me Hart's 1998 book, *The Minuteman*, essentially a blueprint for overhauling the armed forces to meet the threats of a post-cold-war world. But, in general, Polkinghorn and Smith prefer explaining their man's appeal in terms of grand philosophical constructs. While other candidates may be just as strong on individual issues, they explain, Hart has the whole package. "Gary's strength is that he's taken a lifetime to build a coherent philosophy," says Polkinghorn. "He has shaped and synthesized a cohesive vision of how America should operate and what its role should be in the world." As such, Hart's views on everything from national security to education "are all rooted in a self-consistent understanding of the principles underlying the American democracy."

Both Polkinghorn and Smith are *very serious* about their candidate and clearly concerned about being taken seriously themselves. But their youth is often inescapable. When asked an unexpected question—such as how they feel about the responsibility of having perhaps sparked a presidential run—they flash nervous, conspiratorial grins, as though each is daring the other to speak first. And their answers—Polkinghorn admits he's not especially nervous because "I guess we don't have that much to lose"—often reveal a lovely ignorance of just how brutal a presidential campaign quickly becomes.

More cynical political minds might suggest that Hart would be a disastrous candidate—and not just because he perfected the political sex scandal before most Americans had ever heard of Bill Clinton. For many voters, Hart also carries a scent of the loser about him, of someone who had his chance at bat and whiffed spectacularly. But the dirty details of Hart's past don't even make a dent in his young champions' enthusiasm. Monkey Business, they say, must be viewed through the prism of the post-Clinton years and the fact that Hart owned up to his mistakes and moved on. "Whatever's happened, Gary continues to be a loving husband, a providing husband," says Polkinghorn. If anything, he insists, Hart's willingness to have all that personal pain rehashed by the press and public will "underscore his sincerity and purpose."

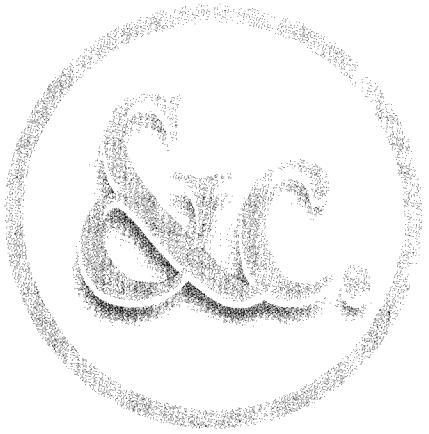
The friends also reject attempts to lump Hart in with Democratic retreads such as Frank Lautenberg and Walter Mondale. "Gary hasn't been on the sideline waiting for his next moment to reenter politics," stresses Polkinghorn. "Really, it was the world that came to meet Gary, as opposed to Gary remodeling himself to enter the world of politics again." From the moment he and Smith met Hart, Polkinghorn notes, "this has been the most organic thing in the world. It has sort of eerily fallen into place, and even today it continues to evolve in a very natural way."

Though still publicly coy about whether he'll run, Hart is preparing a series of policy speeches that he will deliver at universities across the country beginning in January. The first will be on national security, the second on economic policy, the third on foreign affairs, and so on. (The itinerary is not yet set, but Smith, who's working on the logistics, suggests that somewhere in Iowa would be a logical early stop.) Hart says public reaction to these speeches will help him decide whether the climate is right for a run. "I want to see if people think they make any sense. And, if the speeches do receive any press attention and have been critiqued, maybe they will have the effect of getting some other candidates to respond." But, Polkinghorn and Smith's infectious enthusiasm notwithstanding, says Hart, "I have no *need* to be in office. I am not a career politician. People say my career ended in '87, but I didn't see it as a career. I saw it as public service. I don't *need* to be president. I thought I had something to offer in the '80s—and maybe I have something to offer in the new century."

Polkinghorn and Smith are certainly convinced. The moment Hart decides to go for the gold (and possibly before) Smith will drop out of Harvard and head for Denver. Polkinghorn is more ambivalent about leaving med school but clearly hates the idea of missing the action. Hart says he has counseled (and will continue to counsel) the young men against discontinuing their studies. "I've said, 'Don't do that. It's not chopped liver to be at Harvard Medical School.'" Still, he hedges, "What an opportunity for them to learn American politics up close and personal." He points to the grand times he had as a volunteer for John Kennedy's and Bobby Kennedy's presidential campaigns and as director of George McGovern's 1972 White House bid.

I jokingly suggest to Hart that Polkinghorn and Smith may push him into the race regardless of his own preferences, that by stoking his young friends' political fires he may have created a monster. Hart laughs but then adds brightly, "Or vice-versa." ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



A Daily Journal of Politics

bite-sized commentary

updated continuously

only at TNR ONLINE

READ IT EVERY DAY.
www.tnr.com/etc

THE NEW REPUBLIC ONLINE

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Hoopla and Quiet

In 1999 CHARLIE KAUFMAN wrote *Being John Malkovich*, in which a mildly funny twelve-minute revue sketch was distended into a feature film. The poverty of the material was partially disguised by the busyness of all the participants, behaving as if the picture were marvelously clever. Charlie Kaufman's new screenplay, **Adaptation** (Columbia), makes disguise impossible. It declares bankruptcy right at the start, then proves it.

The bluntness of that declaration is meant to be the picture's safeguard, its very meaning. We are asked to follow Kaufman's writing mind as he attempts to build a wisp of a premise into a script. But all the elements are so dull that it is hard to be grateful to him for letting us watch the struggle. Kaufman has put himself into the film, as played by Nicolas Cage (and that wretched actor does not exactly shift matters into high gear). Cage-Kaufman wants to adapt a book called *The Orchid Thief*, wants to make a film about the lives and beings of flowers. This ambition, meant to distinguish Kaufman from the run of Hollywood journeymen, is the beginning of the disaster. Who would care if such a film was made? Or not made? Kaufman's ambition makes him not an exceptionally sensitive soul but an aberration.

Many kinds of trickery and embroidery are laid on as Kaufman pursues his objective. Flashbacks splutter. (One of them goes back four billion years in Hollywood as the first creatures emerge from the slime. Get it?) He goes to New York to consult the author of the book, Susan Orlean (Meryl Streep, wasted). He visits the Florida swamp where the orchids grow. Girlfriends wend in and out. Then the Ur-Kaufman, the one who wrote the film, not Cage-Kaufman, had an inspiration, alas. He gave the Charlie in the film a twin brother, Donald. (Film databases tell us that Donald is fictional.) This twin must of course be played by the same actor, so the picture has to suffer a double dose of Cage.

Worse, Donald wants to be a screenwriter, too, and he apparently represents the Kaufman who could easily write Hollywood hits but who is aspiring. While Charlie is struggling with his poetic concept, Donald bats out an utterly conventional script about a serial killer. Charlie's agent, who has been trying to knock some sense into Charlie's ethereal project, loves Donald's script. The brothers are very fond of each other, but Donald's swift success doesn't help.

The most impressive aspect of *Adaptation* is technical—the numerous joint appearances of the two brothers played by the same actor. The director Spike Jonze and staff have handled these scenes so smoothly, so casually, that our wonder at them disappears. Little would be helped by detailing other matters in the picture, like Susan Orlean's personal involvement with the Florida orchid specialist. Virtually everything that happens in *Adaptation* is almost juvenile showing off—daring to make a film that is in search of a script.

The herniated novelty of the enterprise is crushed with a big mistake at the end. Earlier in the picture Charlie has been advised to get a strong finish for his script. At the last he is smitten with an idea. He will finish his script with the truth of his trouble about finding a finish. This idea, faint though the echo is, reminds us of the ending of Fellini's *8½*, which closes with the writer-director's realization that his self and being are the material that he has been looking for. The reminder of Fellini is hard on Kaufman. *8½* is a masterwork about the difficulties of making art in our time. It is directed and acted and shot and scored with genius. Kaufman's film, in every detail except the wasted Streep, is an account of Nibelungs moiling away underground, mistaking pyrites for gold.

How disquieting and how important it is to see films from the Middle East. In these days when broad brushstrokes are being used to color countries in that region, it is both salutary and sad to be reminded of particulars underneath those strokes. For a dozen years or so, most of those films have been Iranian and, along with much that was good, have brought us one world master, Abbas Kiarostami.

Here is another Iranian film. **Blackboards** (Leisure Time) is by Samira Makhmalbaf, who is not—or not yet—a world master but who at the age of twenty is a gifted director. The daughter of the estimable Mohsen Makhmalbaf, she has already made one film, *The Apple*, and her new one marks a considerable advance. The daughter wrote the screenplay in Kurdish with her father but directed on her own.

It is set in Iranian Kurdistan, bare and bleak mountainous country near the border with Iraq. At the start the brown landscape is empty. Then over the brow of a hill comes a slow line of figures who might be mountaineers leading donkeys or soldiers. As they approach, we see that they are nine men, each of whom has a blackboard strapped to his back. They are itinerant teachers, in search of people who want to learn to read and write, and as they trudge, they compare accounts of their success or failure. They hear a helicopter (Iraqi?) and they hide. Then they scatter. One of them, Reeboir (played by Bahman Ghobadi), meets a band of boys, each loaded with a pack. The boys describe themselves as mules, whose job it is to carry smuggled goods over the border. Reeboir decides to stay with them and try to teach as he can.

Another teacher, Said (Saeed Mohamadi), meets a group of at least fifty nomads, Kurdish people from Iraq trying to make their way back home. Said joins them and, in the course of a few days, teaches a little, is married, and offers his blackboard as a stretcher to carry his wife's father, a sick old man. When the nomads cross the border, they kiss the ground. Said and his wife realize that their marriage will not work and are divorced as summarily as they were married. She keeps the blackboard, which was his wedding present to her.

The prime fact about this film is that it exists. Technically, it must have been horrendously difficult, shooting out in the middle of nowhere and maintaining a large company there. Getting the performances must have been equally difficult. Only Mohamadi and Ghobadi seem to be actors (meant here as a compliment). All the others had to be coached out of self-consciousness, and in every instance the director succeeded. Then there was the camera work. Many shots precede the trudging people as they move along the narrow trails—thus some sort of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Steadicam apparatus had to be mounted on some kind of cart to keep ahead of the people walking toward it. Then there are the shots across chasms of lines of people filing along a mountainside.

Yet even these successes would not matter much if they did not help to realize a work of substance. The center of this picture is people's regard for people, tacit but understood, a regard that rests on their religious faith. Like many other Iranian films, *Blackboards* counters the generally broadcast ideas about this part of the world. It is a testament of quiet endurance, of common concern, of reconciled survival. ■

When Art Fails

By HELEN VENDLER

Amazing Grace: An Anthology of Poems About Slavery, 1660-1810 edited by James G. Basker

(Yale University Press, 721 pp., $45)

I.

WORDS FAIL, photographs fail, movies fail, reconstructed video documentaries fail to convey the human reality of slavery. What might not fail would be a documentary film of slave conditions made at the time: it would be undeniable, it would not be contrived from one ideological hindsight or another. And it would represent the "normal" life of the time, not the condition of war or concentration camps. Last year, to my astonishment, I found myself watching something of the sort on European television.

Since I missed the beginning, I can say only that what I saw was a silent three-hour documentary of colonial life in the Dutch East Indies between 1912 and 1930; the closing credits revealed that it had been spliced together from many such films in Dutch archives. There were anthropologists with calipers measuring heads of cowed subjects, priests convening choirs with peremptory gestures of criticism and approval, bosses giving orders and herding people (workers? refugees?) out of trains and into makeshift camps, doctors impatiently administering inoculations, and above all, with numbing regularity, workers coping, in intolerable conditions of heat and danger, with the machinery of early industrialization: among huge wheels and belts and pulleys and blades, they were cutting steel, stamping out plates of metal, joining up unintelligible pieces to make unintelligible things. The bosses wore white suits (or white cassocks) and pith helmets or hats; the natives wore rags or loincloths, and went barefoot and bareheaded.

The most chilling aspect of the documentary was the attitude of the bosses to the natives, as they herded them like cattle, shouted at them, pushed them about brusquely, kicked them casually (all in the silence of silent film, with a vague musical overlay of melancholy song). It was the ordinariness of it all that was blood-curdling. This was ordinary life on a slave-holding: the white overseers with guns, the gangs of unresisting workers, the interminable hours of labor, the sweat, the strain on the faces, the entire absence of human interchange during the killing work.

Yet the wretched workers in the film that I saw were not legally slaves. Nor had they been forcibly kidnapped in their native country and subjected first to cross-country travel, then (in chains below decks) to the hideous "middle passage" across the Atlantic from Africa to the New World, followed by transport from dock-side to a place of slavery and early death. In short, even the revulsion prompted by the film of colonial exploitation falls far short of what one would feel on seeing a film—if such were possible—of New World slavery. What Whitman said of war—"the real war will never get into the books"—can equally be said of slavery.

BUT STILL THE books are legion, and the subject is inexhaustible. The slave trade, begun by the Portuguese in the fifteenth century, was one of the best money-making schemes ever devised. Since the indigenous populations of the New World either fled from the colonizers or died from disease, it was necessary to import labor to sustain the colonies, and Africa—though far distant from the Americas—was the Portuguese labor source. African slaves, divided by language and local custom, could neither easily organize nor easily escape unnoticed in the Americas (as white indentured servants could do). It has been estimated that two days of a slave's work took care of his subsistence costs; the other four days were profit. Following the Portuguese example, the Spanish, the French, the Dutch, and the English established their empires on the backs of slaves. Slave-worked plantations yielded sugar, tobacco, indigo, spices, and cotton, while slave-worked mines provided precious metals. The planters grew rich, the plantations grew larger and more numerous, and the metropolitan centers such as Lisbon and London found their economies swelling, as everyone grew to like sugar and rum and tobacco.

In each nation, slavery developed in tandem with individual political conditions at home and abroad. For this reason, there are separate histories of slavery in each of the colonial empires, with different outcomes. It is the Anglo-American experience of 1660–1810 that is reflected in *Amazing Grace*, a comprehensive anthology of all verse covering slavery in that period. There are pieces by men and women, black and white, educated and uneducated, British, American, African American, and African. More than two hundred fifty writers are represented in more than four hundred poems and excerpts from longer works. The book contains a useful timeline of events significant in the foundation and the expansion of slavery from the 1430s to 1865, when it was abolished in the United States. The illuminating introduction by James G. Basker, the editor of the volume, sets forth, economically and helpfully, the larger historical context (material, religious, legal, political) that gave rise to these poems. Basher's vivid headnotes

HELEN VENDLER's *Coming of Age as a Poet: Milton, Keats, Eliot, Plath* will be published in the spring by Harvard University Press.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

about each author, together with the notes and eyewitness accounts appended by the authors to some of the poems, are sometimes more moving than the works that they accompany. His list of bibliographical sources (in manuscript or in print) of the poems makes the book of permanent scholarly value.

Although the collection aims at totality, including every author of the period known to have written verse in English about slavery, many long works—epics, even, on slavery—can be represented only in a fragmentary way. The book is conceived as a source of historical evidence—of themes, of attitudes, of the social spread of anti-slavery sentiment, of the verse forms chosen by anti-slavery poets. There is a polemical impulse behind this massive assemblage: Basker wants to refute the idea, recently asserted rather than proved, that English literature connived in the culture of empire. He writes:

> In the late twentieth century a view prevailed in some academic circles that English literature was "complicitous in Empire," that the majority of writers supported and condoned the goals and practices of the "imperial project," including its worst features such as the slave trade and plantation slavery.... [On the contrary], this volume documents in massive detail the degree to which poets were the most outspoken and persistent critics of slavery, and fostered massive changes in public perception and attitude.... The question for us is, how could theories that are so far at odds with the historical evidence have flourished in the first place? This was among the concerns that moved me to gather and publish these poems.

The volume, then, exists to aid "our continuing efforts to understand the past and its implications for the world we live in." It is not intended to be read as a reviewer must read it, straight through; its glimpses of individual lives and verse-responses are better savored in browsing. What might a browser come across? Above all, dramas of the slave tale—the abduction, the brutal passage, the parent severed from a child, the child severed from a parent, the slave suicide, the sexual abuse of female slaves, the branding of fugitives, the toil in the cane fields, the driver's lash. These topics are recycled until they become predictable. Most of the white poet-protesters had not seen slavery at close hand: amateur poets repeated the topics that they had gleaned from books, protest meetings, and sermons, resorting to familiar verse-measures of ballads, songs, and hymns. The language that they ascribed to slaves was drawn in some cases from dialect, in others from literary diction (with the latter more common).

II.

Let me offer some typical examples. From 1788: "Maraton," an Angolan slave aboard ship in the middle passage, when addressed by the ghost of his lost love (torn from him by the slavers), decides on suicide:

> Through the groves of Angola I strayed,
> Love and hope made my bosom their home,
> There I talked with my favorite maid,
> Nor dreamt of the sorrow to come.
>
> From the thicket the man-hunter sprung,
> My cries echoed loud through the air;
> There was fury and wrath on his tongue,
> He was deaf to the shrieks of despair....
>
> Now sinking amidst the dim ray,
> Her form seems to fade on my view;
> O stay thee, my Adila, stay!—
> She beckons, and I must pursue.
>
> To-morrow, the white man in vain
> Shall proudly account me his slave;
> My shackles I plunge in the main,
> And rush to the realms of the brave.

The lilting anapests (*da-da-dum*) belie the mournful message. This "melodramatic ballad [of] sentimental stylization," as Basker calls it, was co-authored by a courageous man named William Roscoe, who lost his seat in Parliament in 1807 when he voted for the abolition of the slave trade, and braved mob violence when he returned home to Liverpool, a slave-trading port. Historically important? Yes. Poetically significant? Hardly.

Calling "heathen" blacks to the putative welcome of Christianity engenders equally amateur poetry: the following, from 1771, is by one Jane Dunlap of Boston, a white woman inspired by the poems of Phillis Wheatley, the Boston slave:

> Poor Negroes flee, you'll welcome be,
> Your colour's no exception;
> But fly to Christ, he's paid the price,
> Meet for your Souls [*sic*] redemption.
>
> And though your souls [*sic*] made black with sin,
> The Lord can make them white;
> And cloath'd in his pure righteousness,
> They'll shine transparent bright.

Like so many Christians, Dunlap strives to symbolize equality in heaven by promising blacks a whiteness they lack on earth, all the while insultingly (if inadvertently) paralleling blackness with sin and whiteness with righteousness. Although beginning with brisk internal rhyme (*flee/be, Christ/price*) and "feminine" b-rhymes (*exception/redemption*), the poem does not keep them up beyond the first stanza. (Dunlap may have realized that her "sprightliness" damaged the serious message of her "Call to the Ethiopians.")

The topic of the abandoned child generates poems in child-voices. Here is an excerpt from "The African Boy," a poem by Edward Jerningham (a professional writer of plays and verse) written in 1766. An adult interlocutor inquires "Ah! tell me, little mournful Moor, / Why still you linger on the shore?" and urges the boy to "Haste to your playmates." This apparently young child answers in exalted diction:

> Benign enquirer, thou shalt know,
> Why here my lonesome moments flow.

It turns out that he is hoping for the return of his mother, snatched away by slavers:

> She fell a prey to tyrant power: ...
> Locked in her hair, a ruthless hand
> Trailed her along the flinty sand;
> A ruffian train, with clamours rude,
> Th'impious spectacle pursued;
> Still as she moved, in accents wild,
> She cried aloud, my child! my child!

In an effort to give spiritual equality to the desperate boy, the writer bestows on him language that could never have been uttered by a childish tongue; it is all too evidently, in its references to "tyrant power," "a ruffian train," and an "impious spectacle," the editorializing voice of the author.

Elevating the black voices is a frequent ethical choice on the part of writers, but it makes for deficient mimesis of credible speech. On the other hand, to choose black dialect is to represent slaves as deficient in expressive skill. Verses in dialect turn up especially in plays and comic operas. Here is a slave imploring his lost African beloved to think of him:

> Poor Orra, tink of Yanko dear,
> Do he be gone for ever,
> For he no dead, he still live here,
> And he from here go never....
>
> And so some time, me tink me die,
> My heart so sick, he grieve me;
> But in a lillee time, me cry
> Good deal, and dat relieve me.

Caught between the Scylla of high style

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and the Charybdis of vernacular dialect, amateur verse moved uneasily when it attempted to represent any but authorial diction. Yet purely authorial lines were fatally likely to subside into self-righteous preaching:

> In mild Britannia many of you dwell,
> Where tortur'd slavery ne'er is heard to yell.
> You fly wherever luxury invites,
> And dissipation crowns your days and nights;
> The dire reflection never meets your view,
> What pangs, what bloodshed, buy those joys for you!

At least this writer, one Captain J. Marjoribanks, was drawing on first-hand experience, and parts of his "Slavery: An Essay in Verse" (1786) have the bitter ring of non-stereotypical anecdote:

> I knew a foetus, in mere wanton play,
> Sold from the mother in whose womb it lay.
> Unhappy mother! doom'd for months to bear
> The luckless burden thou art not to rear!

POETASTERS RATHER THAN poets produced most of the verses in this volume, from "African eclogues" to excoriations of "ruthless Christians." The poems were published in magazines sympathetic to abolition and to reform, during the long campaign (supported by dissenters, especially Quakers) for expanded human rights, political and social. *Amazing Grace* offers impressive testimony to the sheer determination of anti-slavery reformers, as they presented petition after petition to Parliament, and introduced bill after bill, encountering stubborn and entrenched resistance (especially in the House of Lords, which favored the interests of slaveholders). Eventually, a bill to abolish the slave trade was passed in 1807; but since by this time slavery had become self-reproducing (by the birth of children to plantation slaves), the next aim had to be the abolition of slavery itself.

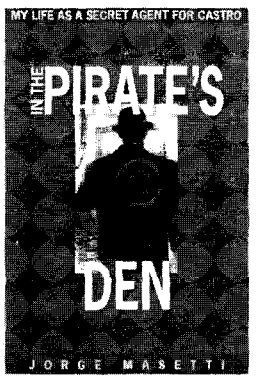
Even the partial victory over the slave trade was greeted with passionate joy. "All hail!—the age of crime and suffering ends; / The reign of righteousness from heaven descends," proclaims the author of "The West Indies," a long poem written in 1808, which was among those commissioned by a London publisher for inclusion in an anthology of anti-slavery poetry (in Basker's words) "timed to celebrate the abolition of the slave trade on January 1, 1808." Even the reader weary of the clichés of anti-slavery verse in these pages cannot come unmoved to the accounts of solemn celebrations of this successful bill. Basker notes "an interracial celebration of the abolition of the slave trade, held on July 14, 1808, in the African Meeting-House in Boston," in which the first of the (anonymous) hymns sung was phrased as a collective cry of former slaves, rejoicing at losing "the terrors of the slave":

> Hark! for 'tis God's own Son that calls
> To life and liberty;
> Transported fall before his feet,
> Who makes the prisoners free....
>
> Into the captive heart he pours
> His Spirit from on high;
> We lose the terrors of the slave
> And *Abba*, Father, cry.

That unforgettable moment of 1808, in which black and white congregants sang this hymn together, is a utopian foretaste of a united America not yet achieved. The same utopian unity is still being longed for in Wallace Stevens's late poem "The Sick Man," which was written in 1950 and published posthumously in 1957. Stevens knows (he is over seventy) that the reconciliation of black and white into harmony will not happen in his lifetime. In the person of the fatally sick man, he hears the separate musics of Southern black bands and Northern white choruses, but he is unable as yet—except in imagination—to unite the black instruments and the white voices:

> Bands of black men seem to be drifting in the air,
> In the South, bands of thousands of black men,
> Playing mouth-organs in the night, or, now, guitars.
>
> Here in the North, late, late, there are voices of men,
> Voices in chorus, singing without words, remote and deep,
> Drifting choirs, long movements and turnings of sounds.
>
> And in a bed in one room, alone, a listener
> Waits for the unison of the music of the drifting bands
> And the dissolving chorals, waits for it and imagines
>
> The words of winter in which these two will come together,
> In the ceiling of the distant room, in which he lies,
> The listener.

In the Pirate's Den:
My Life as a Secret Agent for Castro
By Jorge Masetti



ISBN: 1-893554-42-2 $24.95, 300 pages

"Masetti spins a tale of progressive disillusionment with communism... the book's strength lies... in its description of the world of Communist spying and intrigue that Masetti experienced firsthand." —*Publishers Weekly*

In 1964, at age seven, Jorge Masetti was informed by a Cuban colonel that his father, a friend of Che Guevara's, had died gloriously while leading a guerrilla band in Argentina. By the age of 16, Masetti had left Havana to follow in his father's footsteps, fighting as an urban revolutionary in Buenos Aires. Two years later, he was back in Cuba for a course in "conspiratorial methods." Then he joined the notorious Americas Department, entering what he calls "the pirate's den" as a secret agent for Fidel Castro. In this riveting book, Masetti takes the reader inside the war room of the Cuban revolution as he tells of a life spent supporting the Revolution through international intrigue: smuggling diamonds and ivory in Africa; counterfeiting U.S. dollars in Panama; trafficking in narcotics. In 1990, after the Castro regime killed his father in law, Tony de la Guardia, and the celebrated General Arnaldo Ochoa, Masetti escaped to Spain with his wife and began to rethink his life and his commitments. *In the Pirate's Den* is the result of that painful introspection, a page-turning chronicle of a remarkable journey into and out of the Cuban revolution.

ENCOUNTER BOOKS www.encounterbooks.com
At bookstores everywhere or call 800-786-3839

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Like Stevens's poem, *Amazing Grace* stops upon the threshold of an envisaged future. By 1810, the anti-slavery battle in England was implicitly won (although the very different story in the Americas would go on for decades). The later anti-slavery poems of Whitman and Longfellow and Whittier are well known, whereas their precursor poems, found and reprinted by Basker, are not.

One of the results of Basker's heterogeneous collection is to set in almost painful relief the anti-slavery poems that have aesthetic value. Unsurprisingly, they are by poets whose names are already known to us: Blake, Cowper, Wordsworth, Lamb. Against the stumbling or inappropriate meters of the amateurs, the real poets' handling of the verse line is irreproachable; against the narrative stereotypes of the poetasters, the originality of true poets is even more marked. The talented, like their more inept fellows, write in the usual genres of anti-slavery poetry—the meditation, the satire, the pathetic anecdote, the child-poem—but the good writers transform them.

Wordsworth exemplifies originality in the anti-slavery poem of "high" rhetoric. Shortly after the abolition of the slave trade, Wordsworth writes a sonnet to the scholarly information-assembler Thomas Clarkson, who, with William Wilberforce, was chiefly responsible for the 1807 bill. It is a poem of congratulation and eulogy, but Wordsworth has the empathy to imagine what a dreary and discouraging and yet obsessive task it was to labor for decades toward a political end, finding oneself always a David against the Goliaths of the House of Lords:

> Clarkson! it was an obstinate Hill to
> climb;
> How toilsome, nay how dire it was,
> by Thee
> Is known,—by none, perhaps, so feelingly.

Now that the work is done, Wordsworth asks himself what Clarkson might hope for in the future. He thinks first of inner virtue: Clarkson will have "a good Man's calm." He adds the just sequel of historical success, "A great Man's happiness." But finally, remembering the unrelenting "constant Voice" of conscience that drove Clarkson's exhausting years of almost fruitless toil, Wordsworth has the insight to wish the tireless reformer the elemental physical boon of untroubled rest:

> The bloody Writing is for ever torn,
> And Thou henceforth shall have a good
> Man's calm,
> A great Man's happiness; thy zeal shall
> find
> Repose at length, firm Friend of human
> kind!

To see an almost elegiac "repose at length" trumping calm and happiness is to be made aware of its depleting obverse in Clarkson's life—the "toilsome" and "dire" and "unabating" effort of the undiscouraged abolitionist. This tribute paid by the writer to the reformer, this admiration of the contemplative poet for the zeal of the politically active person, remains a permanently relevant one. Only a poet would think of the legal bills permitting the slave trade as "the bloody Writing," intimating that another, purer writing will replace the "torn" fabric of the former law.

Wordsworth's intuitive homage to Clarkson might be compared to Sir Thomas Edlyne Tomlins's vapid sonnet to William Wilberforce:

> Friend to the Human Race! whose heart
> benign,
> Still listens to the calls of sad Distress;
> And bids thy hand relieve, thy bounty
> bless,
> The African who toils beneath the line ...
> Thy precepts would the storm of War
> controul,
> Bid Tyranny its wasteful ravage cease,
> And spread the reign of Liberty and
> Peace,
> Far as the Sun can light, or boundless
> Oceans roll.

How does distress feel? Sad. What does a benign hand do? Relieve. What is the African doing? Toiling. Where? "Beneath the line" of the equator, of course. What is war? A storm. What sort of ravage belongs to tyranny? Wasteful. What do we hope for? Liberty and peace. What does the sun do? Light the earth. What do boundless oceans do? Roll. This is not poetry, but the pastiche of the bien-pensant.

Wordsworth's sonnet exemplifies the line of anti-slavery writing that is sober, educated, reflective. The line that is satiric and stinging can be found in Cowper, whose "Pity for the Poor Africans" is voiced in the hypocritical tones of the English luxury-lover:

> I own I am shock'd at this Traffic of
> Slaves,
> And fear those who buy them, and sell
> them, are Knaves.
> What I hear of their Hardships, their
> Tortures & Groans,
> Is almost enough to draw Pity from
> Stones.
> I pity them greatly, but I must be
> mum;
> For how could we do without Sugar and
> Rum?
> Especially Sugar so needful we see;
> What, give up our Desserts, our Coffee,
> and Tea?

This is lively enough as a squib; but once read, its point taken, it ceases to be poetically nourishing. Cowper's anti-slavery poems are not the equal of his "Epitaph on a Hare" or "The Castaway."

III.

It was in the vein of pathos that the most popular anti-slavery ballads were written, presenting slaves bewailing their plight (as kidnapped lover, abandoned child, enslaved female). Before taking up the Blakean version of this genre, I offer a standard sort of pathos-poem, the "Miscellaneous Verses" included in the autobiography of Olaudah Equiano, the book that inaugurated the genre of the slave narrative. In this poem, the suicidal despair of the slave finds solace in conversion to Christianity:

> When taken from my native land,
> By an unjust and cruel band,
> How did uncommon dread prevail!
> My sighs no more I could conceal....
>
> Inur'd to dangers, griefs, and woes,
> Train'd up 'midst perils, deaths, and foes,
> I said "Must it thus ever be?—
> No quiet is permitted me." ...
>
> Yet here, 'midst blackest clouds confin'd,
> A beam from Christ, the day-star, shin'd;
> Surely, thought I, if Jesus please,
> He can at once sign my release.

Equiano ends his account gladly owning that "Salvation is by Christ alone!" He has no second thoughts about this cultural adaptation.

By contrast, the greatest anti-slavery poem in the English language, Blake's "The Little Black Boy," which appeared in 1789 in *Songs of Innocence*, adopts the scenario that we find in Equiano, that of a slave who has internalized Christianity, but it establishes a child as the innocently subversive utterer of the poem. The exquisite calibration of the child's language—almost believable as that of a real child, unlike the language of the "little mournful Moor" we saw earlier—is one mark of Blake's genius. Another is the total absence of authorial comment, by which Blake throws the burden of interpretation on the reader.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

This darkest of Blake's satires of conventional Christianity damns religion for the image of inferiority that it has instilled into the little black boy, born in Africa but brought to England with his mother. The boy has been instructed to believe that his exterior blackness will in heaven turn to whiteness, a whiteness proper to the soul, to angels, to light, to the "silver hair" of English children, and to God himself. His loving mother, herself converted to Christianity, teaches the little boy to be patient in his blackness, offers a rationalizing myth for God's having made him black, and promises him a future in heaven in which, at God's command, the "cloud" of his black skin will vanish. In the English household the little black boy is the slave of the little white boy, whom he loves but who does not love him in return. This asymmetry of regard is the little black boy's greatest grief. To assuage it, he makes use (as the poem closes) of his mother's myth of his eagerly awaited heavenly transmutation into whiteness:

My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child:
But I am black, as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree
And sitting down before the heat of day,
She took me on her lap and kissèd me,
And pointing to the east began to say:

"Look on the rising sun: there God does live,
And gives his light, and gives his heat away.
And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive
Comfort in morning, joy in the noon day.

And we are put on earth a little space,
That we may learn to bear the beams of love,
And these black bodies and this sun-burnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove.

For when our souls have learned the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish; we shall hear his voice
Saying: Come out from the grove my love & care,
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice."

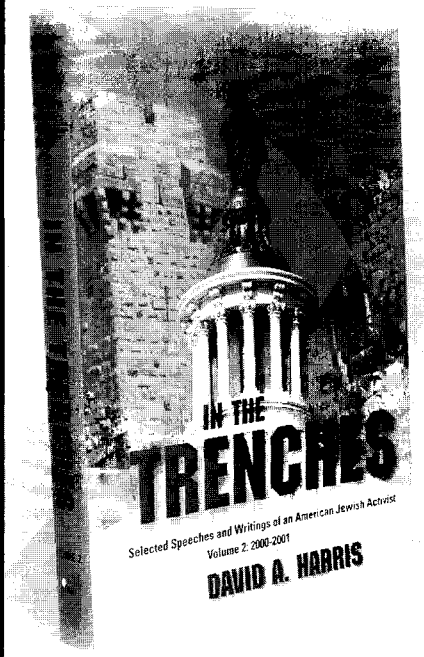
Thus did my mother say and kissèd me,
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy,

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our father's knee,
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him, and he will then love me.

There is everything to praise in this deceptively "transparent" poem. Its center is the tender mother's invention of the Word of God to be uttered to slaves in the afterlife: "Come out from the grove, my love & care, / And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice." This divine invitation, "Come, my lambs," suffused with the deity's own (imagined) tenderness, is conveyed by the mother to her child to counter all the un-Christian, uncharitable, harsh words that he may hear every day from his owners. The "golden tent" of God's love is syntactically contained within the mother's utterance to her little child; and the mother's words are symmetrically bracketed, fore and aft, by the two-stanza prologue and the two-stanza epilogue spoken in the child's own voice. What would a tender God, as imagined by a tender mother, say? What would a tender mother say to fortify her child against the perplexity he feels at his blackness and its effect on others? Blake's beam of imagination creates this scenario so that the reader's "experienced" perceptions can measure themselves against the child's innocent ones.

Blake lets us see how children's sensibilities filter and re-create the realities that they encounter. The little black boy is entirely unconscious of his own heartbreaking pathos, but we wince as he naïvely parrots first what religion has taught him ("I am black, but O! my soul is white") and next what his mother has taught him ("we shall hear his voice"). We feel a greater pang as he extrapolates from these internalized "truths" to the eventual solace, in heaven, of his frustrated affection for the little white boy: "I'll be like him, and he will then love me." It is already so hideous a fact that the little black boy knows that his hope to be loved will never be satisfied in this life that we can barely endure to have him still yearning for reciprocal love from his cold young master. The little black boy's first tentative physical gesture in heaven toward the little white boy—to "stroke his silver hair"—enables us to see how entirely, in life, the child slave's physicality is repressed; he may not touch his young master (though they are together all day in the household). He wonders what the "silver hair"—

WAKE-UP CALL



For American Jews. For all democratic and pluralistic societies. With power and prescience, David A. Harris, executive director of the American Jewish Committee, analyzes the challenges and possibilities in a perilous world.

"With rare brilliance and passion, this book demonstrates anew why David Harris is one of the authentic leaders and indispensable intellectuals of the American Jewish community. Long may his influence reign!"

James O. Freedman,
President Emeritus, Dartmouth College

KTAV Publishing House, Inc.
393 pages, **$29.95 hardcover**

Available from the
American Jewish Committee
1-800-551-3252 larsond@ajc.org
www.ajc.org

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

so unlike his own African hair—feels like, but he will have to wait for heaven to find out.

BLAKE'S BLEAK PRESENTIMENT, transmitted through the child, that people will not love us unless we are like them (that we cannot love people who are not like us) conditions the whole poem. The owners want their slaves to be Christians because their "unlikeness," in practicing African religion, is disturbing; and for the same reason they want their slaves to wear Western dress. Yet for all this fabrication of "likeness," they cannot bleach their slaves white; and the ineffaceable mark of color difference renders the other transformations ineffective. It is literally inconceivable to both the slaves and their owners that "liking" could take place without the removal of the cloud, the shade, the "black body and the sun-burnt face." Blake does not suggest how "liking" can be brought about between races; but he convinces us of the evil of the white culture that has so conditioned its own little son that he cannot respond normally to the affection of another young boy in his own household.

And yet the evil around him has not corrupted the little black boy. His mother has not taught him to hate his masters; over him she has stretched the tent of her own affection, and turned it into God's own golden dwelling. The little black boy has been loved by two people that he knows of—God and his mother—and why should he not hope that a third will love him, too? Blake's poems of innocence (written from the hindsight of experience) always offer social, political, psychological, and ethical insight. The amateur poets create many sentimental figures of pathos who blend into each other; but Blake's little black boy, his protective mother, and his distant young master remain unforgettable, in no small part because of the crystalline openness of the language that the little black boy has learned from his mother. She speaks of sunlight with the simplicity of the pure of heart: "And flowers and trees and beasts and men receive / Comfort in morning, joy in the noon day." (After the regular iambic motion of the first of these two lines, the reversed trochaic stresses on "comfort" and "joy" give us the very intonation of the mother's gratitude.) The mother's "teaching" is physically intimate; she takes her little boy on her lap, and she prefaces and follows her teaching with a kiss. No wonder the little black boy, brought up with such affection, longs for the physical touch of his only young companion.

IV.

IT IS THE unassuming superiority—in concision, in imagination, in impact—of such a poem that makes lesser poems disappointing. In Basker's otherwise excellent introduction, there is a fudging of the (usually honorific) word "canonical" to mean merely "in the anthologies." Anthologies serve many constituencies, and the pedagogical ones are driven by many extra-aesthetic considerations—historical, distributive (on lines of race or gender), exemplary, moral, and so on. Since anthologies are always dropping and including names, amplifying or reducing representation of this or that writer, to cite them as making an author "canonical" is to imagine a very slippery standard. The true "canon-makers" in literature are the ablest writers, who prize anterior writers whose imaginative and linguistic powers they both admire and resist.

Most of the works in Basker's anthology will remain "extra-canonical," in that they are not imaginatively powerful enough to be admired by able writers. Have the poems of Phillis Wheatley become "canonical," as Basker suggests? Wheatley belongs to the history of American writing because her *Poems on Various Subjects*, which appeared in 1773, establishing that a slave could write learned and literate verse, made her famous here and in England. But she fell on hard times and died at thirty, leaving behind some fifty poems, widely inserted into anthologies only recently. Her verse is stiff and derivative, even when she was trying her hardest, as in her tribute to George Washington's defeat of the British in Boston in 1775. She praises the "toils" of "Columbia's" armies:

> Muse! bow propitious while my pen relates
> How pour her armies through a thousand gates:
> As when Eolus heaven's fair face deforms,
> Enwrapp'd in tempest and a night of storms;
> Astonish'd ocean feels the wild uproar,
> The refluent surges beat the sounding shore;
> Or thick as leaves in Autumn's golden reign,
> Such, and so many, moves the warrior's train.
> Shall I to Washington their praise recite?
> Enough thou know'st them in the fields of fight.

Wheatley's heroic couplets scan, but they lack the wit that in better poets distinguishes the form. The comparisons she uses to present wind and waves do not justify their periphrastic Latinity; and there is no coherence of imagination in making armies now a torrent pouring through gates, then a storm, then a "refluent surge" of waves, then a multitude of Autumn leaves. No individual distinction marks the lines. Basker does not distinguish between the historical interest of Wheatley's brief celebrity and the intrinsic achievement of her poetry. "Wheatley's impact spread in all directions.... But perhaps we must allow that Wheatley was exceptional, a kind of star-burst in the center of the literary culture." She certainly was that; but is she a "star-burst" in the galaxy of successful American poems? It is perhaps more amazing that Wheatley, an African slave, could write verse than that Emily Dickinson, in bourgeois leisure and with the best library in Amherst, could do so; but we cannot, in our historical admiration of the one, fail to grant a far greater literary admiration to the other. I wish Basker had been clearer about just what he was claiming in the way of actual literary interest for his enormous collection. The historical interest, needless to say, is exceptional.

READING BASKER'S ANTHOLOGY made me, for the first time in my life, find lyric poetry inadequate as a genre. Again and again, the prose in this book (the headnotes, the authors' notes, Basker's interstitial notes between poems) exceeded the poems, with their stereotypical figures, reiterated stock situations, and insistent abstractions (such as Equiano's unspecified "sorrow," "pain," "griefs," "dangers," "trouble," "woes," "ills," "despair," "travail," "perils," "foes"). Is it possible—I asked myself—that some human circumstances (except in the hands of genius) are better suited to fiction than to lyric?

The prose surrounding the institution of slavery can provide layers and layers of fact (or fiction), describing the long arc of slave abduction, the slave revolts, the types of slave labor, the economics of slavery, the evolution of more and more ingenious tortures, the tension between the metropolitan center and the fringes of empire with respect to both the slave trade and slavery itself. But only a small glimpse of this panorama can be included in a lyric. If it were not for the anomaly of Blake, it might seem that slavery could not be treated imaginatively in lyric at all. Those who experienced slavery were not sufficiently educated in poetry to be able to write lyrics adequate to the subject; and those who wrote lyrics on slavery had not experienced its effect on their own per-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sons. Has there ever been such a great body of lyric work on a topic that was so remote from the poets' experience?

Poems on slavery certainly contributed to the great change of social consensus that took place in the period covered by Basker, as the world turned from a matter-of-fact acceptance of slavery to a powerful revulsion against it. The hardest things to understand, in *Amazing Grace*, are the poems defending slavery; and among them the most surprising is one by Boswell. As Basker remarks, "Whereas Johnson had criticized slavery relentlessly throughout his career ... Boswell defended the institution both in the text of his *Life of Johnson* (1791) and in other writings that are less well remembered." In his "No Abolition of Slavery," written in 1791, Boswell scurrilously rebukes the great reformer Wilberforce:

> Go, Wilberforce, with narrow skull,
> Go home, and preach away at Hull; ...
> I hate your little wittling sneer,
> Your pert and self-sufficient leer,
> Mischief to Trade sits on thy lip,
> Insects will gnaw the noblest ship;
> Go, Wilberforce, be gone, for shame,
> Thou dwarf, with a big-sounding name.

Fearing "mischief to Trade," Boswell, a hereditary laird, pictures slaves as mightily enjoying their life:

> Ev'n at their labour hear them sing,
> While time flies quick on downy wing;
> Finished the business of the day,
> No human beings are more gay:
> Of food, clothes, cleanly lodging sure,
> Each has his property secure;
> Their wives and children are protected,
> In sickness they are not neglected;
> And when old age brings a release,
> Their grateful days they end in peace.

Boswell's note to this passage remarks that "Sir William Young has a series of pictures, in which the negroes in our plantations are justly and pleasingly exhibited in various scenes." Pictures of the beheaded or the mangled, the racked or the raped would not have suited the drawing room. ■

The Philosophy of Money

By GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

The Mind and the Market: Capitalism in Modern European Thought by Jerry Z. Muller

(Alfred A. Knopf, 485 pp., $30)

"THE END OF history"? Not quite. It was only a decade ago that that proposition was put to us, with great learning and with a certain plausibility. The sudden and total destruction of the Soviet Union seemed to be dramatic affirmation of the triumph of liberal democracy. If some of us had doubts, they had to do with the latent forces of "unreason," as Hegel thought them, which might arise in the future, as they had in the past, to resist the march of History—religion, race, nationality, ethnicity, or the sheer willfulness of human beings, peoples as well as tyrants. The one aspect of that thesis that was not controverted was the triumph of capitalism—"the world's only viable economic system," as Francis Fukuyama put it, which was so vital a part of liberal democracy.

A decade later we are prepared to doubt this, too. Capitalism may still be the "only viable economic system," but that does not ensure its acceptance by all nations and regimes. It does not even ensure its acceptance by the most rational and thoughtful people in those nations and regimes. Capitalism, it turns out, was never simply an "economic system," and was never thought of as such, so that its economic viability was not the only, or even the principal,

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB is the author, most recently, of *One Nation, Two Cultures* (Knopf).

ADVERTISEMENT

TNR BOOKMARK

THE PLACE TO FIND YOUR FAVORITE BOOKS.

Cambridge University Press
1-800-872-7423
www.cambridge.org

Cato Institute
1-800-767-1241
www.cato.org

Columbia University Press
1-800-944-8648
www.columbia.edu/cu/cup

Harvard University Press
1- 800-405-1619
www.hup.harvard.edu

Johns Hopkins University Press
1-800-537-5487
www.jhupbooks.com

Princeton University Press
1-800-777-4726
www.pup.princeton.edu

Routledge
1-800-634-7064
www.routledge-ny.com

Stanford University Press
1-800-621-2736
www.sup.org

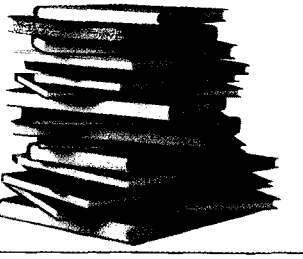
University of California Press
1-800-822-6657
www.ucpress.edu

University of Chicago Press
1-800-621-2736
www.press.uchicago.edu

University of North Carolina Press
1-800-848-6224
www.uncpress.unc.edu

The MIT Press
1-800-405-1619
mitpress.mit.edu

Yale University Press
1-800-405-1619
www.yalebooks.com



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

issue. What has inspired, or appalled, both the critics and the defenders of capitalism are the moral, social, and political implications of this system.

Capitalism, as distinct from commerce and trade, is relatively recent, reflecting novel modes of industrialism and commercialism, production and distribution, investment and finance, property and wealth. And more recent still is the idea of capitalism. The term itself was coined in the nineteenth century—after the event, as it were—by its critics. As late as 1911, the Encyclopedia Britannica had no entry under that name. The word appeared only once in the article on "Capital," at the very end of the bibliography in a reference to "modern socialist theorizing against 'capitalism.'" ("Capitalism" in quotation marks signified its usage by socialists as an epithet.) Before "capitalism," there was "commerce" or "trade," which had similar connotations, favorable and unfavorable. In a sense, anti-capitalism long antedated capitalism, and gives every indication of surviving as capitalism flourishes in the new "globalized," "post-industrial," "technetronic" economy.

In his new book, Jerry Z. Muller has given us a history not of capitalism but of the idea of capitalism, in "case studies" of sixteen thinkers in the past two centuries. The book is about equally divided between critics and defenders (with some a bit of both). Muller's opening chapter, a breathless gallop from antiquity to modernity, presents us with some of the themes that were to re-emerge, less eloquently but no less passionately, in later criticisms of capitalism. Pre-modern regimes, and pre-modern thinkers, generally agreed that the martial virtues, the religious virtues, and the civic virtues were far more important to humanity and to society than the commercial virtues, if they could be dignified as such. Socrates's pronouncement that "the more men value money-making, the less they value virtue," and Aristotle's admonition that the "merchant's way of life" was not appropriate for a citizen because it was "ignoble and contrary to virtue," were echoed by the Gospels' teachings that "you cannot serve God and mammon" and "the love of money is the root of all evils." Although Aquinas held a benign view of property, he was distrustful of trade because it generated profit, which "knows no bounds." Even the Protestant Reformation, which has been associated with an ethic congenial to capitalism, continued to be suspicious of trade, prohibiting usury and stigmatizing the Jews who were associated with it.

The "civic republicanism" of the seventeenth century, reverting to the Greek tradition, honored the landed proprietor who was free to devote himself to his civic duties and higher virtues, without demeaning himself by the sordid process of acquiring wealth. Only with Hobbes, Muller says, did there begin that "transvaluation of values" which legitimized commerce, wealth, and luxury, together with all other pursuits that contributed to the "contentments of life." It is curious to find Hobbes mentioned as one of the few dissenters from the prevalent hostility to wealth and commerce, but not Locke, who was far more influential in his own time and since, and whose theories of property and labor have been interpreted as a vindication of capitalism (or at least of "nascent capitalism"). Yet this introductory chapter, however hasty, is an instructive prelude to the centuries that follow, if only because it reminds us of the ancient sources of modern discontents.

Readers may be surprised to find that Muller's first unapologetic defender of capitalism is Voltaire—the original and quintessential "intellectual," as Muller dubs him. The familiar Voltaire of the Enlightenment, the apostle of reason, tolerance, and the rule of law, turns out to have been also a champion of commerce, industry, and the pursuit of wealth. It might have been Adam Smith defending self-interest as the basis of a healthy society and productive economy. "It is as impossible," Voltaire wrote, "for a society to be formed and lasting without self-interest as it would be to produce children without carnal desire or to think of eating without appetite, etc. It is love of self that encourages the love of others, it is through our mutual needs that we are useful to the human race. That is the foundation of all commerce, the eternal link between men."

It might also come as a surprise to some readers to learn that Voltaire—and here he differed from Smith—had a personal stake in that ethic, and that his defense of money-making, wealth, luxury, even usury, was not entirely disinterested. He was, in fact, unabashedly avaricious and, not infrequently, unscrupulous and dishonest. As a young man he left England with an unsavory reputation for fraudulent financial dealings, and two decades later he lost the favor of Frederick and was forced out of Prussia for illegal speculation with government bonds. If Voltaire defended usury, it may have been in part because a considerable portion of his own income came from lending money to royalty—and not for the modest return that Smith prescribed as a reasonable rate of interest, but for substantial lifelong annuities (with the proviso that they be paid to his mistress after his death.

But it is Adam Smith, of course, who deserves pride of place in this story, for it was he who gave capitalism (although not under that name) its moral as well as economic legitimacy. Muller quotes Smith's characterization of Voltaire as one of those men of "splendid talents and virtues" who displayed "the most improper and even insolent contempt of all the ordinary decorums of life and conversation," thus setting "the most pernicious example to those who wish to resemble them." Yet Muller does not make enough of the differences between these two champions of capitalism—differences in the way they conceived of human beings as well as of economics, and, not incidentally, differences in the way they lived their lives. While Voltaire reveled in the royal court at Potsdam and the salons of Paris, acquired a lavish chateau and estate, and died one of the richest commoners in Europe, Smith lived modestly and unostentatiously in Glasgow, gave away to charities most of his income during his lifetime, and left virtually nothing at his death.

Today Smith is known primarily as a political economist. In his own time he was equally famous as a moral philosopher. It used to be thought that the two Smiths were incongruent—*das Adam Smith Problem*, the Germans called it. Recent scholarship has resolved the problem. The professor of moral philosophy and the political economist, the author of *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* and of *The Wealth of Nations*, were one and the same. Indeed, in his day Smith was as much admired for the earlier book as for the later, and he himself, so far from putting the earlier book behind him, spent his last years revising and expanding it.

Smith's moral philosophy, like his political economy, was democratic as well as liberal. Where Voltaire, valuing reason above all, was contemptuous of the common people—*la canaille*, he called them—because they were incapable of that elevated idea of reason, Smith ascribed to all people the same qualities and virtues. The "moral sentiments" that defined the ethical nature of man—pity, sympathy, compassion—were presumed to be common to all, as was the "propensity to truck, barter, and exchange," which was the basis of all economic activity. The "nation," in *The Wealth of Nations*, was not the polity but the "people," and it was the interests of the people, their wealth and well-being, that were the subjects of the book and the rationale of the new political economy. The free market was to bring about a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of the people ... a general plenty [which] diffuses itself through all the different ranks of society."

If industrialism (and capitalism) should fail in that purpose, if the division of labor threatened to degrade the laborer, Smith (belying his reputation as a rigorous laissez-fairist) sought to counter that tendency with an elaborate plan of state-subsidized and state-enforced education for all poor children. This was in dramatic contrast to Voltaire, who opposed the education of the common people on the grounds that they were too mired in the superstitions of religion to become educated. The people, he explained, would never have "the time and the capacity to instruct themselves; they will die of hunger before they become philosophers.... We never pretended to enlighten shoemakers and servants; that is the job of the apostles."

IT IS REFRESHING to find Edmund Burke among Muller's defenders of capitalism. He is all too often dismissed as an unregenerate reactionary. As some historians have presented us with "two Smiths," so there are said to have been "two Burkes": the Burke who championed the cause of the American colonists, carried on a long campaign against the East India Company, and declared himself a disciple of Adam Smith, a proponent of a free market and a "progressive" economy; and the Burke who denounced the French Revolution, was a staunch supporter of traditional values and institutions, and was especially critical of the men of letters and "economists" to whom he attributed so mischievous a part in the Revolution. Muller resolves this dubious dichotomy and restores Burke to his rightful place in the Enlightenment. In his long vendetta against the East India Company, Burke was attacking not commerce itself but the gross mismanagement of the company, to the detriment of both the stockholders and, worse, the Indian people. And in criticizing the French Revolution, he was asserting the need for a culture that respected manners, morals, and the social institutions (family and church) that provided the foundations of public order, which were the prerequisites not only of a sound polity and society but also of a healthy economy.

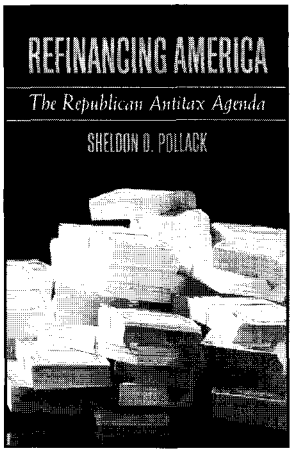
If Burke is an unconventional but rightful presence among the defenders of capitalism, so is Hegel, who, even more than Burke, is often vilified as a reactionary, a state-obsessed authoritarian who provided the intellectual rationale for fascism and Nazism. Muller belies this stereotype by reminding us of the crucial place of civil society in Hegel's schema, of the market in civil society, and of private property as the warrant of individuality and freedom. Like Burke, his conception of political economy was consciously indebted to Smith. And, again like Burke, his idea of capitalism was, one might say, "capitalism plus," a capitalism not diminished but enriched by institutions, traditions, sentiments, even Reason.

THERE ARE TWO obvious candidates for the distinction of being the first serious modern opponent of capitalism: Rousseau and Marx. Yet Muller awards that honor to Justus Möser, a contemporary of Rousseau. The leading citizen of a small state in western Germany, Möser was fearful that commerce and trade would subvert the culture and institutions, the ideas of honor and public duty, that had served his community so well for centuries. It is interesting to find this resident of a backwater in central Europe voicing some of the same objections as the civic republicans of an earlier generation in England or the critics of globalization of our own day. But it would have been more interesting to confront some of these complaints, and others of greater moment, in the person of Rousseau, who is briefly identified in the introductory chapter as "the foremost critic of commerce within the Enlightenment," but who is then, except for occasional passing references, strangely absent from this account.

Voltaire may have been the more representative figure of the Enlightenment, but on this subject at least Rousseau has been far more challenging and influential. His arguments against the sciences and arts, which his confrères confidently identified with progress, and against the pursuit of wealth and luxury, which he saw as resulting in a fatal inequality, have reverberated for centuries. "The ancient political thinkers," Rousseau wrote, "forever spoke of morals and of virtue; ours speak only of commerce and money." Rousseau's *Discourses* are a devastating indictment of modernity—and, not incidentally, of capitalism. In some ways, they have has been even more powerful than Marx's critique, for they cut across class and ideological lines, inspiring critics of capitalism from both the left and the right.

Still, it is Marx who is generally regarded as the hero of the piece—or the villain. Muller's Marx is not the materialistic, "scientific" critic of capitalism that he himself claimed to be, but a Romantic, moralistic, pre-Enlightenment critic, who

STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK PRESS



"...an excellent behind-the-scenes look at the legislative process."
—Jay Soled, Rutgers University

REFINANCING AMERICA
The Republican Antitax Agenda
Sheldon D. Pollack

A fascinating account of the long history of antitax sentiments within the Republican party, *Refinancing America* looks at how opposition to income and wealth taxation became the dominant factor influencing the party's political agenda.

280 pages
Illustrated: 5 tables
$22.95 pb ISBN 0-7914-5590-4

ORDER YOUR COPY TODAY!

Visit our website at **www.sunypress.edu**, now with online ordering!
Or call: 1-800-666-2211 • e-mail: orderbook@cupserv.org • Amex, Disc, MC, Visa

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"merely recast the traditional Christian stigmatization of money-making into a new vocabulary." This is the Marx of the 1840s, of the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*, *The German Ideology*, the essay on the "Jewish Question," and the *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, all of which, Muller believes, culminated in *The Communist Manifesto* in 1848. These writings, Muller claims, are the essential Marx, all the later work, including *Capital*, being nothing more than "an attempt to confirm and elaborate ideas that he had developed by the age of thirty."

This early Marx made much of the concepts of "alienation" and "exploitation," decried money as unproductive and interest as usurious, and defined the proletariat not in terms of class interests and the class struggle, but as the "class in civil society that is not of civil society, a class that is the dissolution of all classes, a sphere of society having a universal character because of its universal suffering." The final state of communism, in this scheme, would witness not only the dissolution of the proletariat but the de-alienation of man himself. Man would no longer be confined to the particular activity that enslaved him but would be free to do as he liked: "to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize [philosophize] after dinner," as the spirit moved him.

Muller takes this to be the real Marx—and so it was, for a while, for a generation of neo-Marxists in the 1960s and 1970s who, disillusioned by the reality of communism, fell back upon this "young" Marx, this Marx with a "human face." But even this rejuvenated, humanistic, universalistic Marx is no longer credible today. (I think that the hunting, fishing, cattle-rearing, and above all the philosophizing in the evening did him in.) Indeed, Marx himself discredited it in *The Communist Manifesto*, mocking the German "literati" who uttered such "philosophical nonsense" as the "alienation of humanity." When it was suggested to Engels, after Marx's death, that *The German Ideology* be published as a book (some of the early essays had appeared in the only issue of a German journal published in Paris), Engels appended to a review that he was writing exactly two pages, the "Theses on Feuerbach," of the six-hundred-odd-page manuscript. Dismissing the rest as of no interest, he recalled that Marx himself had willingly abandoned those old writings to the "gnawing of the mice." (Engels meant this literally; many pages had in fact been consumed by mice.)

The only suggestion of anything like the alienation of man in Marx's later writings is a single reference in the *Critique of the Gotha Program* (1875) to a "higher phase of communist society," when the increase of "productive forces" would free man from the "enslaving subordination" to the division of labor, abolish the "antithesis between mental and physical labor," and make possible "the all-round development of the individual." It is no accident (as a Marxist would say) that the later Marx, the "mature" Marx, never provided a "blueprint" (as Marxists contemptuously put it) for that "higher phase" of communism. The very nature of his theory, the thoroughly deterministic, materialistic mode of thought that gave it its presumption of being "scientific," precludes speculations and predictions about the future condition of society, let alone about the future condition of man.

Today *Capital* is read as a powerful indictment of a system that exploited and oppressed the proletariat, reducing it to a commodity, an appendage of the machine. Yet it may also be read, as Hannah Arendt did, as itself reducing man to just such a commodity and appendage. No thinker, Arendt wrote, ever reduced man to an *animal laborans* as totally as Marx did. Locke made of labor the source of all property; Smith made of labor the source of all wealth; but it remained for Marx to make of labor the very essence of man. Labor, Marx wrote in *Capital*, is "a necessary condition, independent of all forms of society, for the existence of the human race; it is an eternal nature-imposed necessity, without which there can be no material exchanges between man and nature, and therefore no life." This is not so much an indictment of capitalism as a description of the human condition, at all times and under all economic systems. And this, the "mature" Marx as well as the "young" Marx, is the historic and essential Marx, the Marx that provided the ideology for Communist parties and regimes and was the inspiration for generations of intellectuals and disciples.

IT IS CURIOUS that the only nineteenth-century English thinker who figures in Muller's book is Matthew Arnold. *Culture and Anarchy* happens to be a favorite of mine, but in this context it is surely of less moment than John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (which Arnold implicitly criticizes in *Culture and Anarchy*) or, more to the point, Mill's much more substantial *Principles of Political Economy*, with which Marx takes issue in *Capital*. Deriding Mill's theories of value and profit, Marx concludes by dismissing Mill himself, in his usual vitriolic fashion: "On the level plain, simple mounds look like hills; and the imbecile flatness of the present bourgeoisie is to be measured by the altitude of its great intellects."

Marx notwithstanding, Mill is especially interesting in the debate over capitalism because he stands on both sides of the divide, supporting a free and "progressive" market economy—but only up to a point. In the not too distant future, he predicted, the economy would cease to expand and would come to rest. Such a "stationary state" was not only inevitable but also desirable, a respite from "the trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading on each other's heels, which form the existing type of social life." Today this is the familiar rhetoric of critics of capitalism and "globalization," while the idea of a stationary state is echoed by the School of Rome, the small-is-better school. And Mill's later flirtation with socialism is a premonition of the "Third Way" theorists who aspire to reconcile a market economy with a considerable degree of state regulation and direction.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the main themes of the debate had been so well developed that the thinkers of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, who dominate the latter part of this book, seem almost anti-climactic. Except for the solitary figure of John Maynard Keynes, they are all German or Central European, and sociologists for the most part rather than economists (or economists with a large dose of sociology). The debate centers on the *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* thesis, the distinction between community and society, with some (Ferdinand Tönnies and Werner Sombart) arguing that capitalism generates an individualistic society that is inimical to genuine community, while others (Max Weber and George Simmel) insisted that it is consistent with, indeed conducive to, both individuality and community. Marx might have been distressed to find that the socialists among them (Georg Lukács and Herbert Marcuse) based much of their critique of capitalism on the idea of alienation that he himself had repudiated. It is interesting that Lukács invented an "early Marx" even before those early manuscripts had been published, by reading back from Marx to Hegel and imaginatively reconstructing a Hegelian-like young Marx.

With Joseph Schumpeter the debate acquires an ironic twist, for while he believed capitalism to be morally and socially benevolent as well as economically efficient, he predicted that it would be subverted by an intellectual class that was hostile to it for ideological and cultural rather than economic reasons. As if to con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

firm that prediction, Keynes, one of the leading lights of the English intellectual elite, proceeded to argue that although capitalism was an effective motor of economic growth, its moral, cultural, and social effects were such as to vitiate and, in effect, illegitimize it. His ethical objections, however, were not quite the traditional ones. He complained not that capitalism was insufficiently communal or humanitarian, but that it was insufficiently individualistic and hedonistic. The capitalist ethic, being future-oriented rather than present-minded, encouraged the deferral of gratification and the saving rather than the spending of wealth, thus hindering, Keynes argued, the spontaneous, uninhibited enjoyments and pleasures that he, like the rest of his Bloomsbury circle, identified with the good life.

ONE OF THE fascinating themes running through the whole of Muller's book is the prominence of the "Jewish Question," not only, as one might suppose, on the part of the opponents of capitalism but also on the part of its defenders. For the critics of capitalism (and the pre-capitalistic critics of trade and commerce), the Jews were Christ-killers and Christ-deniers, moneylenders and usurers, stiff-necked aliens with peculiar, antisocial customs and traits. For the traditionalist Möser, they were the peddlers who ruined the good morals of the peasants and villagers by infecting them with desires and goods not appropriate to their station. For the radical Marx, the Jews were the very epitome of capitalism, representing the "practical essence" of money. "What is the worldly cult of the Jew?" he asked. "Bargaining. What is his worldly god? Money." Thus the "emancipation of humanity" required the "emancipation of humanity from Jewdom." Quoting approvingly this passage from Marx, the conservative and nationalistic Sombart portrayed the Jews as not only typifying capitalism but also as playing a crucial and entirely malignant part in its development, their religion nurturing in them the spirit of rational calculation and abstraction that was perfectly in keeping with the "Judaized" mode of *Gesellschaft* and antithetical to the Christian *Gemeinschaft*.

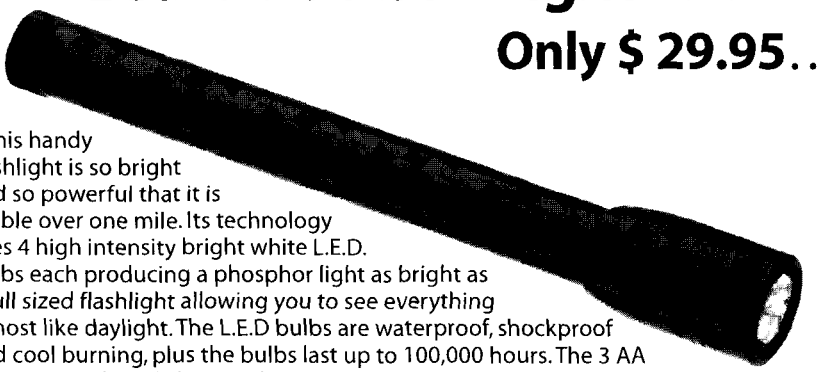
More intriguing, because less expected and less familiar, is the animus against Jews demonstrated by the opening figure in this saga, the first and one of the staunchest of Muller's defenders of capitalism. Voltaire's blatant anti-Semitism, so at odds with his much-vaunted espousal of religious tolerance, may have been inspired in part (but only in part) by his quarrelsome relations with Jewish financiers. Muller suggests that he projected upon Jews—all Jews, ancient and modern—the accusations that had been made against him of avarice and unscrupulousness. Other historians have tried to explain away this embarrassing trait by interpreting it as evidence not of anti-Semitism but of anti-religion in general and anti-Christianity in particular. Owing to the censorship, it is said, the critique of Christianity became deflected into a critique of Judaism. This explanation does not account, however, for the venom and the passion of Voltaire's diatribes, not only against the Judaism of the Old Testament but against modern Judaism and modern Jews. Nor was it only in private letters and in his personal relations that his animus was expressed. Arthur Hertzberg pointed out many years ago, in his seminal book *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, that Voltaire's views on the subject were well known at the time. The anti-Semitic pamphlets regularly cited him in their favor, while Jewish commentators (and defenders of the Jews) had no doubt but that he was their enemy.

It is interesting that the anti-Semitism generally associated with the later critics of capitalism appeared earlier in the person of this vigorous champion of capitalism, who happened also to be an icon of the Enlightenment. It is also interesting that so many of the characters in this story—again, on both sides of the debate—were Jewish by birth or descent: Marx, of course, but also Simmel, Lukács, Marcuse, even (the name notwithstanding) Ludwig von Mises. One who was not Jewish, Friedrich Hayek, was so much a part of the circle of Viennese Jews in the 1920s that he practically identified himself with them. For Hayek, Muller observes, "the fate of the Jews was closely aligned with the fate of liberalism, and the fate of liberalism was inextricably intertwined with the fate of capitalism." Like many of his Jewish compatriots, Hayek found refuge in London, and it was there, at the height of the war, that he wrote his best-known (but not best) book. *The Road to Serfdom*, published in 1944, is a vigorous defense of individual liberty and minimal government, which Hayek identified as the classical virtues of liberalism, in contrast to the modern revisionist liberalism that gave preference to equality and favored a more intrusive government. One of the lessons of that book, which Hayek said he learned in Vienna and which he believed to be insufficiently appreciated by foreigners, was the fact that "German anti-

Illuminate the night with

Led Club Flash Light™...

Only $ 29.95...



This handy flashlight is so bright and so powerful that it is visible over one mile. Its technology uses 4 high intensity bright white L.E.D. bulbs each producing a phosphor light as bright as a full sized flashlight allowing you to see everything almost like daylight. The L.E.D bulbs are waterproof, shockproof and cool burning, plus the bulbs last up to 100,000 hours. The 3 AA batteries (included), last 10x longer than in regular flashlights. This sleek stylish flashlight comes in black with a light aluminum, impact resistant body and wrist strap that can also be used to hang it. Use it for road emergencies in your car, boat, RV while camping, around your home or office. Measures: 7.5" L X 1" W. Be prepared for that emergency. Order yours today. Save and buy 2 for $49.95. Include $5.95 S/H. Item#LF4001. **30-Day Money Back Guarantee**. 1-Year Warranty. We accept Check/Visa/MC/AMEX, (WA) add 8.9% sales tax

Somerhills

21818 66th Ave. West, Ste. #8
Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043
Call **Toll Free 1-877-519-0622**
www.somerhills.com

mention order code **NR0103**

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Semitism and anti-capitalism spring from the same root."

Hayek brings this story to a close. A "neoliberal," Muller calls him, he enjoyed his "Hayekian Moment" in the 1980s (he had received the Nobel Prize in Economics several years earlier), when Keynesian economics had fallen into disfavor together with the welfare state and socialism, both of which proved to be patently less successful than capitalism in creating and distributing wealth. Muller concludes this otherwise sympathetic account of Hayek on a cautionary note. Unlike Smith and Burke, he observes, Hayek failed to take seriously the negative effects of the market or the positive role of government. His was a salutary corrective to the prevailing form of liberalism, but it was not in itself "a balanced and rounded philosophy."

MULLER'S SUBTITLE DEFINES the parameters of his book: "Capitalism in Modern European Thought." But the subject warrants a sequel: "Capitalism in Modern American Thought." For it is in America that the debate took the next step, beyond liberalism and neoliberalism to what has come to be known as neoconservatism, an attempt to reconcile the free-market economics of capitalism with the "countermarket" institutions of family and church, state and nation. Such a sequel would not only carry the story forward; it would also carry it back in time to the founding of the American republic, a period as momentous in the history of modernity as the Enlightenment in Europe. *How Capitalistic Is the Constitution?* is the title of one anthology on the subject. Jefferson and Madison, the Federalists and the Anti-Federalists initiated a debate that has engaged every generation since, from the Jacksonian Democrats early in the nineteenth century to the Gilded Age toward the end, and on into the following century with the New Deal, the Great Society, and the conservative revisionism that emerged in the last decades of the century.

This revisionism does not pretend to resolve the tension between economic liberalism and social conservatism, between self-interest and the public interest, between the popular culture driven by commerce and the high culture that may have no commercial validation, and indeed disdains such validation. But it does respect these competing ideas, and it does attempt to abate the tension by making capitalism itself responsive to the moral and social demands of a humane and civilized life. In this sense, it has brought to the subject a realism and an optimism that are notably absent in the acrimonious and sterile debate that has so long occupied European intellectuals. Americans take for granted what Europeans regard as an inexplicable paradox: that the United States is the most capitalistic and at the same time the most religious and moralistic of all Western countries.

"America," Hegel pronounced, "is the land of the future, where, in the ages that lie before us, the burden of the World's History shall reveal itself." It was an extraordinarily prescient remark at the time and it remains prescient today, as the world's superpower takes on burdens that even Hegel could not anticipate. Francis Fukuyama's idea of the "end of history" owed a great deal to Hegel's "World History." But the history that is playing itself out in America, the history of liberal, democratic capitalism, has by no means come to an end. And that history would be a worthy challenge to Muller and a splendid sequel to the European story that he has told so well. ■

Morbid Longings

By RUTH FRANKLIN

The Little Friend by Donna Tartt

(Alfred A. Knopf, 555 pp., $26)

"LADIES AND gentlemen," announces Harry Houdini in an epigraph to Donna Tartt's new novel, "I am now locked up in a handcuff that has taken a British mechanic five years to make. I do not know whether I am going to get out of it or not, but I can assure you that I am going to do my best." Houdini's ghost hovers faintly over *The Little Friend*, but the handcuff to which Tartt is referring seems to have more to do with her last novel than her current one. For with *The Secret History*, her enormously popular debut in 1992, Tartt set herself a trap as elaborately and painstakingly worked as Houdini's handcuff, and one from which escape has proved exceedingly difficult.

All first novels are traps of a sort, but if Tartt's cage was unusually gilded—*The Secret History* sold more than a million copies and established the writer, still in her twenties, as a publishing legend—it was also unusually constricting. Though critics celebrated Tartt's technical brilliance, they generally treated the book as a thriller, if an unusually well-written one, with all the condescension thus implied. The plot makes it easy to see why: a tightly knit group of eccentric college students, inspired by the Greeks, conduct a bacchanal during which (true to their source) they accidentally kill a local farmer. When their friend Bunny finds out about the murder, he blackmails them, and they decide the only way out is to kill him as well.

Yet *The Secret History* is not a murder mystery, not least because the murders are over before the book is halfway through. All the melodrama makes it easy to overlook how smart a book it is, from Tartt's inspired choice of a narrator (the book is told in a flashback by Richard, a latecomer to the classics group who is somewhat of an outsider to the events) to her sophistication about her own methods. The novel begins with an epigraph from Plato—"Come then, and let us pass a leisure hour in storytelling, and our story shall be the education of our heroes"—and Richard picks up on the storytelling motif in the novel's prologue. "This was a tale that told itself simply and well," he says of Bunny's death: "the loose rocks, the body at the bottom of the ravine with a clean break in the neck ... a hiking accident, no more, no less." But this "tale," of course, is false, since Bunny's death was no accident. And *The Secret History*, despite its deceptively straightforward beginning—"This is the only story I will ever be able to tell," Richard somberly concludes—is not told simply at all. It is a multiplicity of stories: Richard's journey as a scholarship student to the elite Hampden College, the complex dynamics of the group of friends, and the characters' psychic disintegration in the aftermath of the murder, which unrolls over the course of the entire second half of the 500-plus-page novel.

Stylistically, *The Secret History* is nearly perfect, from its deliberately edgy pacing to its beautifully realized dialogue. But

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

what is most seductive about the book is its extraordinary sense of atmosphere. Richard begins the novel with a little speech about the "fatal flaw," and notes that his own is "a morbid longing for the picturesque at all costs." This is a fine description of the aura of decadence that suffuses the novel's world. Tartt's style can bring to mind the early Ian McEwan, but her affinity for the grotesque has deeper roots. Richard comments at one point that the "breath of the ancient world" can be sensed around the group of friends, and one also gets a dank whiff of the gothic. Like her eighteenth- and nineteenth-century predecessors, Tartt delights in the sheer artificiality of fiction, mixing the real and the unreal, the recognizable and the unfamiliar, into a waking-dream collage. And, like her forebears, she darkens the mood now and then with touches of the supernatural, some left tantalizingly unexplained.

The characters who thrive in this hothouse could be refugees from Dickens or Brontë. Henry is the group's leader, an independent-minded if unfocused genius who published a translation of Anacreon ("with commentary") when he was eighteen, and at one point is described translating *Paradise Lost* into Latin as a way to kill time, "like some people do crossword puzzles." Francis, his sidekick, is a flamboyant, petulant trust-fund baby whose family owns a crumbling country house to which the group often retreats. Charles and Camilla, orphaned twins, have faces like a pair of "Flemish angels." All are deliberately anachronistic, in their clothing (Henry always wears a "dark English suit" and carries an umbrella, and it is one of Tartt's most fantastic touches that not one of these college students seems to own a pair of jeans) and in their affectations, which include using straight pens and bottled ink to write their Greek homework.

Reading the book as an adult, it is easy to see Henry for the cold pedant that he is, and Francis as a spoiled hypochondriac, and Camilla as manipulative, and Richard, in the end, as a cipher. But to read it in college is to be swept away by the childish fantasy of it all—the beautiful clothes and the rich friends and the dreamy indulgence. Hampden College is awash in pharmaceuticals, but the novel's real drug is the opiate of nostalgia. Richard, narrating the events at a distance of ten years, is still too in love with the friends to look at them with an even faintly critical eye.

And as irresistible as *The Secret History* is, it too finally asks to be adored rather than examined. Some critics have located the book's own fatal flaw in a lack of a moral center, and it is true that the characters admit of no emotion regarding the murders other than the fear of being caught. But by the end their mental unraveling is complete. Whether it was Bunny's murder itself or the effort to cover it up that undoes them, the friends descend into a psychological chaos reminiscent of Dostoyevsky. And it is here that Tartt's gothic sensibility finally runs wild. The fraternal closeness of Charles and Camilla explodes in alcoholic violence. Richard is plagued by nightmares in which Bunny's murdered corpse appears in his dorm room. And Henry's shadowy malevolence starts to make one wonder whether he might be the devil himself.

Though these sinister elements contribute a great deal to the book's power, eventually they undermine its moral gravity. It is hard to shake the sense that Tartt does not take her own book entirely seriously. And this, I think, is because the gothic, no matter how carefully it is handled, always runs the risk of crossing over into camp. Tartt for the most part gets it right: the supernatural elements are not events in themselves, but symbols of the real psychological terrors beneath. Still, the "morbid longing for the picturesque at all costs" is in the end a fundamentally unserious notion. The students are fond of evoking the maxim that "beauty is terror." But terror itself has an unnerving tendency to dissolve into laughter.

THE ROMANCE OF death has deep roots for Tartt. In a brief memoir that appeared in *Harper's* just before the publication of *The Secret History*, she described her "Southern gothic childhood" in vivid detail. Born to parents who were "neither able nor inclined" to deal with an infant, she was raised by her great-aunts and grandparents, and a great-grandfather who treated her frequent ailments with glasses of whiskey and "massive doses" of codeine cough syrup. "Between the fever and the whiskey and the codeine," she writes, "I spent nearly two years of my childhood submerged in a pretty powerfully altered state of consciousness." Her great-grandfather believed that her sickliness was a sign that she would soon be "gathered swiftly to the Lord"; on one bad night, she overheard him say to her mother, "I'm afraid that poor child won't live to see the morning."

It is no surprise that Tartt, too, was possessed by the idea that she would meet an early grave. Delirious with fever and drugs, she suffered terrible nightmares:

> The very worst dream of all still frightens me to think of, even though it is years since I last dreamed it. In it, a set of

Prooftexts

A Journal of Jewish Literary History

The Cinema of Jewish Experience

A Special Issue
Edited by
Joel Rosenberg and
Stephen J. Whitfield

The Languages of *The Jazz Singer*
The Church and the Holocaust in the Art of Louis Malle
Remembrance and Testimony in Paul Celan's *Night and Fog* Translation
Pedagogy & Memory in *The Pawnbroker*
Fertility Myth and Medieval Romance in Israeli Political Films
Space and Gender in the New Israeli and Palestinian Cinema
Yiddish in Israeli Cinema
The Double Legacy of *Arbeit Macht Frei*

The Cinema of Jewish Experience $18.95
available at
www.iupjournals.org

For subscription information on *Prooftexts* and other journals available from Indiana University Press, please visit our website.

INDIANA

Photo: Gila Almagor and Kaipo Cohen in *The Summer of Aviya*, directed by Eli Cohen. Copyright 1988 By Eli Cohen. Reprinted by permission.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

country-club types—smartly dressed, around what would have then been my parents' age—are gathered, cocktails in hand, around a barbecue grill. They are snickering with jaded amusement as one of their number—a handsome, caddish-looking fellow—holds a howling Persian cat over the barbecue, pushing its feet into the flames.... Though it was never quite clear exactly who these people were, it was obvious to me that what they were doing was Devil worship ... and that what I had glimpsed were only the more innocent, preliminary stages of the ritual. Unimaginable horrors lay beyond. Which set me thinking, as I lay back trembling in bed after Mother had come and gone, about Devils, and Hell, and all the bad things there were in the world, and what was really going to happen to me after I died, and I would start to scream again....

The demon of this nightmare—all the bad things there are in the world, and what really happens after we die—has pursued Tartt well into adulthood, and it forms the link between *The Secret History* and *The Little Friend*. Though both novels are centered around the murder of a young person, they truly find their focus in the multiplying acts of violence that shoot out like angry tendrils from the original crime. *The Little Friend* finds Tartt more enmeshed in the macabre than ever, though it has now taken on the more realistic (if no less gruesome) characteristics of the style familiar as Southern gothic. Rather than enhancing the novel's psychological impact, though, this fixation—there is a corpse, human or animal, in every chapter—threatens to choke it.

The prologue of *The Little Friend* describes the murder of nine-year-old Robin Cleve Dufresnes; or rather, it describes the circumstances surrounding Robin's murder, because the crime itself is witnessed only by his two sisters, the infant Harriet and the four-year-old Allison, who has repressed whatever she saw to such an extent that it appears in her dreams only as a white sheet. When the novel proper begins, twelve years later, that terrible day has hardly faded; as in *The Secret History*, the impact of a person on those close to him is far greater in death than it was in life. And again Tartt is obsessed with crimes that go unpunished: Robin's killing reverberates in the various acts of depravity that ripple throughout the book, from emotional betrayal to, finally, another murder.

Ghalib's Prophecy of His Death, 1860–1861

It is 1277, the Muslim year
I predicted I would die. Nassar
my distant cousin from Agra came
all the way to Delhi just to check on me.
So, he said, you are not dead
but everyone expected you
to die, according to your plan.

Nassar, I said, my best cousin coming
all the way from Agra. But since
you are blunt, tell me, are you let down
I'm still wheezing? Believe me,
I am not mistaken about my death,
but now that cholera has come to Delhi,
how can I die in a general epidemic?
Let the virus pass over this city.
Then I will see about my death.

With that, Nassar left word
with my watchman to write to Agra
when I died. Watchman hinted I'd live
another twenty years. In any case
the road from Agra is tortuous and
my cousin would not again dent
his Fiat for a man who'd bluff about
his death, he'd not come for twenty years,
praise-Allah-Ghalib-should-live-so-long,
said my cousin Nassar of Agra to my night
watchman who reported this fact to me.

Reetika Vazirani

Harriet and her sister have been raised largely by their grandmother Edie, a bevy of adoring great-aunts, and the family's longtime housekeeper, Ida Rhew. (Robin's death sent the girls' mother into a dreamy depression from which she has never awakened, and their father lives with a mistress in Nashville, returning home only at Christmas.) Harriet, who looks like a "small badger," is the sort of child who likes to read about Genghis Khan and Captain Scott and to stir up fights among her great-aunts by telling them what they really think of each other's Christmas gifts. But she, too, has grown up obsessed with her brother's death, which she blames for the disintegration of her family. Left to her own devices for the summer, she resolves to track down and punish Robin's killer, whom she decides, based on the most circumstantial indications, must be Danny Ratliff, a former classmate of Robin's who has sunk into a life of petty crime. As Harriet trails Danny around town (there are shades of *Harriet the Spy* here), waiting for the right moment to strike, he becomes equally obsessed with her, convinced that she is out to get him for an entirely different reason.

The plot machinations that lead Harriet into her detective work are creaky, and in general the thriller's backbone fits *The Little Friend* even more poorly than it did *The Secret History*. At its best moments, this novel is something like an epic of two families in the South, with overtones of forebears from Margaret Mitchell to Anne Rice. The Cleves are descended from the town's elites, and once lived in a plantation ponderously named Tribulation. Like the great-aunts who remember it, the house is now crumbling, but they have carefully preserved its chandeliers and china, which appear to Harriet like "dinosaur bones" that, if examined carefully enough, will reveal the shape of the family's past.

Like Harriet and her sister, the Ratliff brothers have been reared by their grandmother, but that is where the resemblance ends. Danny's older brother Farish is simultaneously terrifying and comical: he will wear only brown UPS coveralls, which he buys by the dozen, perhaps because this outfit reminds him of his old days as a letter carrier—a job that fit well with his sideline in burglary, as it kept him apprised of the neighbors' vacation schedules. "The bushy black beard and the brown jumpsuit made him look like some kind of crazy South American dictator," Harriet's friend Hely remarks. Now, recently out of prison, he runs a dual taxidermy and methamphetamine business from a shed behind the family's trailer. (The stink of the taxidermy chemicals conveniently masks the "distinctive cat-piss smell" of the meth cooking.) Another brother, Eugene, has become a roadside preacher after an injury suffered in prison left him born again, but his new devotion to God doesn't prevent him from turning a blind eye to his brothers' business. Danny, despite his hoodlum exterior, turns out to be the most three-dimensional of the brothers: he longs to get a job as a truck driver and escape Farish's cycle of addiction and crime.

Tartt has lost none of the considerable gifts she displayed in her first novel; she is one of the most mesmerizing writers of her generation. Some of the book's most enjoyable sections show off her wicked eye for social satire, most evident here in her skewering of all representatives of orga-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nized religion. Roy Dial is a deacon-cum-automobile salesman who soaks little old ladies but turns over his proceeds to the Baptist Church; he slithers around town repossessing the cars of those down on their luck. There is also an exquisite sequence involving Harriet's brief stay at Bible camp, with a director given to bellowing "Praise the Lard!" and his sugary wife whose goal is to get all the campers to sign an "Abstinence Covenant."

The most important subtext in *The Little Friend* is the relations between blacks and whites in this small Mississippi town. The material here is strong enough to fill an entire novel, especially the implicit contrast between the unapologetic racism of the Ratliffs (in an early scene Danny and Farish entertain themselves by randomly shooting at blacks fishing in the creek) and the more complicated but no less vicious racism of the Cleves. Edie is fond of saying that it makes no difference whether people's skin is "black or white or purple," but when one of the great-aunts dies it occurs to no one in the family to inform the black maid who worked for her for thirty years, who lives without a telephone in an area known as "Niggertown." Harriet loves Ida, her own family's housekeeper, like a mother, but the family makes her drink out of a separate glass. Such details do much to contribute to the novel's faintly anachronistic feel; it is a shock to learn (from a casual mention of the Panama Canal transfer) that it must take place in the late 1970s, not, as one would think from the way the blacks are treated, in the 1950s or the 1960s.

But while *The Little Friend* contains the framework for many different novels, all of them potentially very good, the book that it actually turns out to be is not entirely satisfactory. A part of the trouble is Tartt's focus on Harriet, who is only vaguely likable at the beginning and grows less and less appealing as the book goes on. This is not entirely Harriet's fault; it is the novel that fails her, not the other way around. Though *The Little Friend* resembles a thriller even less than *The Secret History*, it keeps insisting that it is one, with a number of gory escapades that seem to function solely to keep the pages turning. In one scene, Harriet and Hely break into Eugene's Mission to steal a cobra that belongs to a visiting evangelical. (They are nearly caught, of course.) The novel's climax is an even more preposterous confrontation between Harriet and Danny at the town's water tower, which hinges upon a ladder breaking at just the right moment. These scenes, loaded with action as they are, prevent Tartt from looking long enough at Harriet to give her the kind of character development that is necessary for a satisfying coming-of-age story. When, at the very end of the novel, Harriet is finally allowed to realize what has been apparent to the reader for some time, the abrupt conclusion cuts the book off before she can come to grips with the truly serious thing that she has done.

It's a shame that Tartt has been unable to harness the real psychological terror of her material. The murder of children, after all, has been a gothic staple since the days of the Brothers Grimm. The fact that this theme is lately most often on display in film—most recently in *The Blair Witch Project* and the stalker-movie parodies of the *Scream* series—may only be a sign of its deeper relevance in contemporary American culture. But Tartt has a good deal of company: in a summer that was interrupted weekly by reports of new child abductions, Alice Sebold's novel *The Lovely Bones* was hardly a surprise success. Like *The Little Friend*, *The Lovely Bones* opens with the murder of a child, in this case fourteen-year-old Susie, who narrates the book from heaven, observing the responses of her family to her death. Parts of Sebold's book are overly cute—each person gets their own heaven tailored to their personal preferences, which in Susie's case includes a duplex with a view of a dog run—and there are moments of outright sentimentality, but she appeals purely and plainly to the emotions in a way that Tartt's considerably more enigmatic book does not. Sebold's message is deeply, if falsely, consoling: despite her rape and murder, Susie winds up safe in her heaven, with her duplex and her dogs. And her book focuses firmly on the living; the corpse quickly vanishes from sight, both literally and figuratively.

Tartt's books are neither simple nor sentimental, and her dark visions, whether of privileged New England undergraduates or decaying figures of the Old South, leave a very powerful imprint. But she has not yet figured out how to channel her interest in mortality—which is, after all, a subject of the most primary significance—into the force that it needs to be for her literature. At the moments when her books would force her to take death seriously, she retreats into the haven of genre, of fast action and fast talking. Ten years ago, this could be taken as a sign of an inexperienced writer; now it is hard to be as generous. Many good novels are not great literature. That is Donna Tartt's real trap, which she has yet to escape. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

continued from page 4

in some form," or that there is dissent in the country—quickly and brutally suppressed.

Despite saying those kinds of things regularly and also regularly reminding our viewers of the restrictions on our reporting, I am still here. Although unpalatable for the government to hear, the lack of freedom and depth of fear here is fact. Is Foer seriously suggesting that a country of 24 million people can be covered by interviewing those who have left for Iraqi Kurdistan or Jordan? Reality doesn't fit into a nice, neat package. Unfortunately, neither does Iraq.

Jane Arraf
Bureau Chief
CNN Baghdad
Baghdad, Iraq

Franklin Foer replies:

Jane Arraf described my piece as fiction yet challenges almost none of my facts. First, she says that journalists can get visas from locales other than the Iraq Embassy in Amman. I never claimed this is the only route, just the most common. My piece includes on-the-record descriptions of this process from reporters such as NPR's Eric Weiner. CNN, for whom Arraf works, has a long-standing relationship with Baghdad and doesn't need to go through the same bureaucratic hoops as most organizations. Finally, she accuses me of selectively quoting from her dispatches. But she refutes none of my specific examples. Instead, she quotes herself on the Iraqi prisons. She should quote further. On October 20, she told viewers that Saddam Hussein's release of prisoners "really does diffuse one of the strongest criticisms over the past decades of Iraq's human rights records, that it does jail political prisoners, and that nobody knows what happens to them." So a p.r. stunt diffuses one of the longest records of torture and capricious arrest in modern times? While Arraf points to her recent reportorial record, she neglects to mention her coverage of Saddam's October sham presidential referendum. She told viewers, "[T]he point is that this really is a huge show of support" and "a vote of defiance against the United States." I wish it were true that she qualified such absurd statements with an admission that she was being watched, hounded, and controlled. Her letter doesn't cite examples of such honesty. They are nearly impossible to find. ■

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WASHINGTON DIARIST

Tutor

IN THE MATTER OF TOM PAULIN'S opinions about Israel, why discuss their legitimacy when we can discuss their stupidity? Paulin is the distinguished poet who wrote in a poem called "Killed in Crossfire" in the *London Observer* on February 18, 2001, that

> ... another little Palestinian boy
> In trainers jeans and a white teeshirt
> Is gunned down by the Zionist SS
> Whose initials we should
> —but we don't—dumb goys
> Clock in that weasel word
> Crossfire.

and told *Al-Ahram Weekly* of Cairo in April that "I have never believed that Israel had the right to exist at all" and that the Jewish settlers in the occupied territories "should be shot dead. I think they are Nazis, racists, I feel nothing but hatred for them." When he was asked last winter to read his poetry at Harvard, these unlyrical exclamations returned to haunt the *luftmenschen* and *-frauen* who invited him, there was pressure to rescind the invitation, a controversy ensued, first principles were strewn all over Harvard Yard, the poet withdrew, and everybody was left with a sensation of victimhood, which is to say that a good time was had by all. I would not have disinvited the man and his problem. If hate speech should not be restricted, then it should not be restricted even when it is me that it hates. The American way must be to take offense so as to give offense, to suck it up and then go after the substance of it, so that none of the mistake and the insult is left morally or intellectually standing. It is not all that hard to humiliate a person who believes that Zionism is Nazism, to make him seem like a perfect idiot. To question Paulin's legitimacy, by contrast, makes him seem only like a hero, which no doubt confirms him in his own image of his lonely, valiant, dissenting, visiting-professor self.

THE VIEW THAT ZIONISM IS NAZISM—there is no other way to understand the phrase "Zionist SS"—is not different in kind from the view that the moon is cheese. It is not only spectacularly wrong, it is also spectacularly unintelligent. I will not offend myself (that would be self-hate speech!) by patiently explaining why the State of Israel is unlike the Third Reich, except to say that nothing that has befallen the Palestinians under Israel's control may responsibly be compared to what befell the Jews under Germany's control, and that a considerable number of the people who have toiled diligently to find peace and justice for the Palestinians, and a solution to this savage conflict, have been Israeli, some of them even Israeli prime ministers. There is no support for the Palestinian cause this side of decency that can justify the locution "Zionist SS." Paulin's expression does not reveal him to be quite the "reader of almost fanatical scrupulosity" that Edward Said has found him to be, at least as regards the "reading" of history and morality. As for the reading of literary texts, in some of his critical writings Paulin has prided himself on his loathing for T.S. Eliot's anti-Semitism, carrying his prosecutorial enthusiasm beyond hermeneutical plausibility. (Paulin is one of the most remorseless politicizers of poetical interpretation now at large: He reads Emily Dickinson for her "critique of mercantile values.") In his new book of poems, *The Invasion Handbook*, he has Eliot entertaining himself in a wordgame with a notorious anti-Semite that mischievously anticipates a place "far away to the east" whose name is a "rhyme for *Ritz*/no not *Biarritz*." This is unfair even to Eliot; but its indignation on behalf of the Jews is forever vitiated by "Zionist SS."

AS FOR THE JEWISH SETTLERS, I WILL not dignify Paulin's bloodlust with my own objections to their worldview: Even if they are wrong, he can go to hell. There is an old radical tradition that blesses writers who demand that people who fall within a particular political definition be "shot dead," that discovers conscience in an appetite for murder. Is there a significant distinction between being shot dead and being blown to bits? If, instead of remarking that the settlers should be shot dead, Paulin had remarked that they should be blown to bits, then his jihadism would have been even more plain. Anyway he told the Egyptian weekly that "I can understand how suicide bombers feel." I wonder if Paulin believes that there will be room for progressive writers in Sheik Yassin's Palestine. Pity the poet who is disinvited from there.

WHEN I SAY THAT PAULIN'S HATE speech hates me, I do not wish to melodramatize. I wish to suggest that Paulin may suffer from, how shall I say, an acute sensitivity to Jews. I find evidence of this condition in that odd and phonily self-lacerating epithet "dumb goys." The epithet is only half right. You would have to be dumb to see the SS in Israeli crossfire, but you would not have to be non-Jewish. There are many Jews who make the foolish analogy, and there are many non-Jews who denounce it. Paulin's phrase suggests that in his unlovely view the debate about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is essentially a debate between Jews and "goys." (A fanatical scrupulosity would have written "goyim.") He reifies me. I will not be reified.

THERE IS ALSO ANECDOTAL EVIDENCE for Paulin's imbalance in this regard. In 1999, Nadeem Ahmed, a graduate student at Hertford College, Oxford, who was pursuing a master's degree in medieval Arabic philosophy, was asked to take exams in Arabic, along with two other students. He took the exams and he failed. Then he sued the university for racial discrimination. As it happens, Ahmed's "moral tutor" at Hertford was Tom Paulin, who rose to his student's defense and concurred in his student's analysis that he had been persecuted. And, as it happens, Ahmed's instructor was a man called Friedrich Zimmermann. When the university's lawyer asked Paulin at the trial in March why he had not taken his complaint to Zimmermann, Paulin weirdly explained that "I had heard on the grapevine that he was a very difficult person," and also remarked that Zimmermann had arranged a sabbatical in Israel "to get out of the way." Get it? The Jew harmed the Muslim and escaped to Israel. The university's lawyer showed that the sabbatical was planned long before the trial was scheduled. But Paulin's sinister insinuation lingers. I have no idea whether Nadeem Ahmed's exam was graded properly by Friedrich Zimmermann. But I do know that piety about oppression sometimes breeds fantasy. When you invent victims, you invent victimizers.

PRETTY DEMAGOGIC, HUH? I MEAN my suggestion that Paulin may not be mentally pure in his treatment of this question. Sinister insinuations, indeed. But what did the dumb goy expect? I cannot help myself. I am a smart Jew. I write for an organ of international Zionism. I think that Israel has a right to exist. I do not care to understand how suicide bombers feel. I am the man who stands between a good world and a bad world, though I would never stand between Tom Paulin and Harvard.

LEON WIESELTIER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Cost of a Proficient Student

bert J. Walberg is a
tinguished visiting
N, Hoover Institution;
ember of Hoover's
t Task Force on K–12
ation; and University
holar and research
fessor emeritus of
tion and psychology
University of Illinois
at Chicago.

Fourth grade marks the point that proficient students stop learning to read and start reading to learn. A federal achievement survey performed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) estimates that in 1998 only 29 percent of fourth graders attained such proficiency. Lack of reading skills reduces students' chances of thriving academically and graduating from high school.

Failure cannot be blamed on low spending. State-level per-student expenditures ranged from $3,969 in Utah to $9,643 in New Jersey. Taxpayers could reasonably expect that such investments would produce academically proficient fourth graders, whom the NAEP defines as demonstrating "solid academic performance" and being well prepared for fifth-grade work.

U.S. taxpayers spent an average of $107,000 to produce a proficient fourth-grade reader in 1998, the latest year for which data are available. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the annual per-student cost of K–12 public education was $6,189 for the 1997– 98 school year. Thus, by fourth grade, the cumulative U.S. taxpayer investment in a child's public education is five years at roughly $6,189 a year, or $30,945.

Given that the expenditure of $30,945 per pupil produced only twenty-nine proficient readers out of every one hundred, the cost per proficient fourth-grade reader is $30,945 divided by 29 percent, or about $107,000. This calculation provides a cost index of how productively each state is using its tax dollars to produce proficient fourth-grade readers.

The three states with the highest costs per proficient fourth-grade reader are Hawaii ($172,000), with just 17 percent of Aloha State students reading at a proficient level; New York ($153,000), with 29 percent; and Delaware ($148,000), with 25 percent. New York and Delaware deliver only mediocre reading proficiency despite being among the top six states in the nation in per-pupil spending. **The highest cost by far was in the District of Columbia, where the cost of producing a proficient fourth-grade reader was $420,000—six times higher than in Utah.**

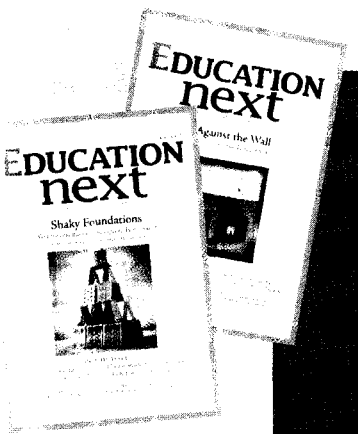
The three states with the lowest cost per fourth-grade reader are Utah ($70,900), with 28 percent of Beehive State students reading at proficient or above; Montana ($77,400), with 37 percent; and New Hampshire ($81,000), with 38 percent. Montana and New Hampshire achieve substantially higher than average proficiency rates at lower than average costs. Data from every state can be found at http://www-hoover.stanford.edu/pubaffairs/we/2002/walberg_1202table.html.

The new federal No Child Left Behind Act requires annual testing of all third through eighth graders. It will allow more timely comparisons not only of states but also of school districts and even schools. Other interesting calculations would be the costs of proficient algebraists by eighth grade and by high school graduation.

The cost per proficient student provides a usefully compact index to track the efficiency of schools because it combines effectiveness with cost, both of which are important to taxpayers who want to know the value of what their tax monies buy. Furthermore, they ought to be able to compare one school, school district, or state with another and to ask legislators and educators for an explanation of the comparative standings.

— *Herbert J. Walberg*

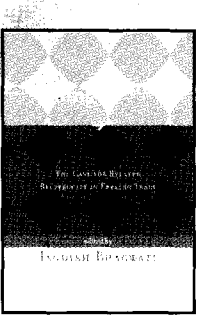
Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University.



Interested in cutting-edge ideas about K-12 education?
Subscribe to *Education Next: A Journal of Opinion and Research.*
Visit us on-line at www.educationnext.org or contact us to receive a complimentary copy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Award winning economics from Jagdish Bhagwati and The MIT Press



Going Alone

The Case for Relaxed Reciprocity in Freeing Trade

edited by Jagdish Bhagwati

"This is a path-breaking work on the common practice of freeing trade unilaterally. Bhagwati and his team comprehensively analyze the relative merits of unilateralism and reciprocity. All future studies of either issue will have to start from where this work leaves it. Bhagwati, who has been the original source of most important developments in the theory of commercial policy, has once again produced a seminal and definitive work." — T. N. Srinivasan, Samuel Park Jr., Professor of Economics, Yale University

2002 — 654 pp., 14 illus. $60

Fair Trade and Harmonization

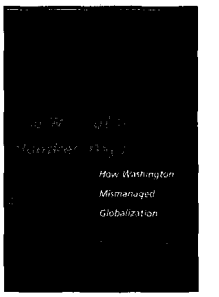
Prerequisites for Free Trade?
Volume 1: Economic Analysis
Volume 2: Legal Analysis

edited by Jagdish N. Bhagwati and Robert E. Hudec

"A sophisticated economic and legal analysis of major post-Uruguay Round trade issues." — Kenneth W. Dam, Max Pam Professor of American and Foreign Law, University of Chicago, and Deputy Secretary of the Treasury

"I expect that for years to come, both scholars and policy makers will be turning to these papers for guidance on the most important policy issues on the new trade agenda." — Robert Z. Lawrence, Albert L. Williams Professor of International Trade and Investment, Harvard University

Published under the auspices of ASIL
1996 — Volume 1: 608 pp. $90, Volume 2: 460 pp. $90



The Wind of the Hundred Days

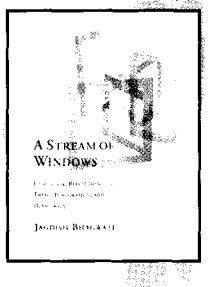
How Washington Mismanaged Globalization

Jagdish Bhagwati

"Jagdish Bhagwati, one of the world's most eminent economists, is also one of the most consistent and successful at bringing the lessons of international trade theory — particularly the virtues of free trade — to the public. . . . *The Wind of the Hundred Days* is impressive. . . . Highly readable and enlightening, Bhagwati's book covers the major policy issues in the international economy over the last few years." — Jeffrey Frankel, *Foreign Affairs*

2000 — 408 pp., 13 illus., $21.95 paper

Winner of the 1998 Eccles Prize for Excellence in Economic Writing



A Stream of Windows

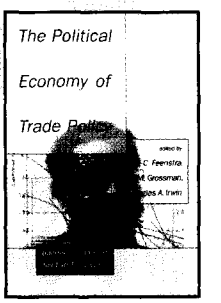
Unsettling Reflections on Trade, Immigration, and Democracy

Jagdish Bhagwati

"In a profession that prizes elegance of algebra more than prose, Jagdish Bhagwati is a sparkling exception. He is a brilliant academic economist — one of the world's leading trade theorists — who also happens to be a gifted, mischievous and passionate writer. . . . As a smorgasbord of elegant prose, superb economics and impish opinions, [this book] is a delight." — Zanny Beddoes, *Times Literary Supplement*

"Mr. Bhagwati has long been a Nobel Prize contender for his contribution to the theory of international trade — contributions leavened by apt metaphors, clear examples and even poetry." — Sylvia Nasar, *The New York Times* and author of *A Beautiful Mind*

1998 — 531 pp. $22.95 paper



The Political Economy of Trade

Papers in Honor of Jagdish Bhagwati

edited by Robert C. Feenstra, Gene M. Grossman, and Douglas A. Irwin

"This is a superb collection of essays in honor of a great economist—Jagdish Bhagwati. Written by students and associates, these papers reveal the vast influence that Bhagwati has had on the subject of international economics." — Edward E. Leamer, Chauncey J. Medberry Professor, Anderson School, University of California, Los Angeles

1996 — 320 pp., 20 illus. $50

The MIT Press

http://mitpress.mit.edu

To order call **800-405-1619.** Prices subject to change without notice.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED